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THE

WORKS

OF THE

REV. JOHN WESLEY.

VOLUME VII.

CONTAINING,

TWENTY-SEVEN SERMONS ON VARIOUS SUBJECTS.

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THE

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SERMONS,

ON

SEVERAL OCCASIONS.

PREFACE.

1. THE following Sermons, contain the substance of what I have been preaching for between eight and nine years last past. During that time I have frequently spoken in public, on every subject in the ensuing collection: and I am not conscious, that there is any one point of doctrine on which I am accustomed to speak in public, which is not here, incidentally, if not professedly, laid before every Christian reader. Every serious man, who peruses these, will therefore see in the clearest manner, what these doctrines are, which I embrace and teach, as the essentials of true religion.

2. But I am thoroughly sensible, these are not proposed, in such a manner as some may expect. Nothing here appears in an elaborate, elegant, or oratorical dress. If it had been my desire or design to write thus, my leisure would not permit. But, in truth, I, at present, designed nothing less; for I now write, as I generally speak, *ad populum:* to the bulk of mankind, to those who neither relish nor understand the art of speaking: but who, notwithstanding, are competent judges of those truths, which are necessary to present and future happiness. I mention this, that curious readers may spare themselves the labour of seeking for what they will not find.

3. I design plain truth for plain people: therefore, of set purpose, I abstain from all nice and philosophical speculations; from all perplexed and intricate reasonings; and, as far as possible, from even the shew of learning, unless in sometimes citing the original Scriptures. I labour to avoid all words which are not easy to be understood, all which are not used in common life: and, in particular, those kinds of technical terms, that so frequently occur in bodies of divinity, those modes of speaking, which men of reading are intimately acquainted with, but which, to common peple, are an unknown tongue. Yet I am not assured, that I do not sometimes slide into them unawares: it is so extremely na-

tural to imagine, that a word, which is familiar to ourselves, is so to all the world.

4. Nay, my design is, in some sense, to forget all that ever I have read in my life. I mean to speak, in the general, as if I had never read one author, ancient or modern, (always excepting the inspired.) I am persuaded, that on the one hand, this may be a mean of enabling me more clearly to express the sentiments of my heart, while I simply follow the chain of my own thoughts, without entangling myself with those of other men: and that, on the other, I shall come with fewer weights upon my mind, with less of prejudice and prepossession, either to search for myself, or to deliver to others the naked truths of the gospel.

5. To candid, reasonable men, I am not afraid to lay open what have been the inmost thoughts of my heart. I have thought—I am a creature of a day, passing through life, as an arrow through the air. I am a spirit come from God, and returning to God: just hovering over the great gulf; till a few moments hence, I am no more seen! I drop into an unchangeable eternity!. I want to know one thing, the way to heaven: how to land safe on that happy shore. God himself has condescended to teach the way; for this very end he came from heaven. He hath written it down in a book! O give me that book! At any price, give me the Book of God! I have it: here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be *homo unius libri.** Here then I am, far from the busy ways of men. I sit down alone: only God is here. In his presence I open, I read his book; for this end, to find the way to heaven. Is there a doubt concerning the meaning of what I read? Does any thing appear dark and intricate? I lift up my heart to the Father of Lights.—Lord, is it not thy word, "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God." Thou "givest liberally and upbraidest not." Thou hast said, "If any be willing to do thy will, he shall know." I am willing to do: Let me know thy will. I then search after and consider parallel passages of Scripture, "comparing spiritual things with spiritual." I meditate thereon, with all the at-

* A man of one book.

tention and earnestness of which my mind is capable. If any doubt still remain, I consult those who are experienced in the things of God; and then, the writings, whereby being dead, they yet speak. And what I thus learn, that I teach.

6. I have accordingly set down in the following sermons, what I find in the Bible concerning the way to heaven; with a view to distinguish this way of God, from all those which are the inventions of men. I have endeavoured to describe the true, the scriptural, experimental religion, so as to omit nothing which is a real part thereof, and to add nothing thereto which is not. And herein it is more especially my desire, first, to guard those who are just setting their faces toward heaven, (and who, having little acquaintance with the things of God, are the more liable to be turned out of the way,) from formality, from mere outside religion, which has almost driven heart religion out of the world: and, secondly, to warn those who know the religion of the heart, the faith which worketh by love, lest, at any time, they make void the law through faith, and so fall back into the snare of the devil.

7. By the advice, and at the request of some of my friends, I have prefixed to the other sermons contained in this volume, three sermons of my own and one of my brother's, preached before the University of Oxford. My design required some discourses on those heads. And I preferred these before any others, as being a stronger answer than any which can be drawn up now, to those who have frequently asserted—That we have changed our doctrine of late, and do not preach now, what we did some years ago. Any man of understanding may now judge for himself, when he has compared the latter with the former sermons.

8. But some may say, I have mistaken the way myself, although I take upon me to teach it to others. It is probable, many will think this, and it is very possible, that I have. But I trust, whereinsoever I have mistaken, my mind is open to conviction. I sincerely desire to be better informed. I say to God and man, "What I know not, teach thou me!"

9. Are you persuaded you see more clearly than I? It is not unlikely that you may. Then, treat me, as you would desire to be treated yourself upon a change of circumstances. Point me out a better way than I have yet known. Shew me it is so, by plain proof of Scripture. And if I linger in the path I have been accustomed to tread, and therefore am unwilling to leave it, labour with me a little, take me by the hand, and lead me as I am able to bear. But be not displeased if I intreat you, not to beat me down, in order to quicken my pace: I can go but feebly and slowly at best; then, I should not be able to go to all. May I not request of you, further, not to give me hard names, in order to bring me into the right way. Suppose I were ever so much in the wrong, I doubt this would not set me right. Rather, it would make me run so much the farther from you, and so get more and more out of the way.

10. Nay, perhaps, if you are angry, so shall I be too; and then there will be small hopes of finding the truth. If once anger arise, ηυτε καπνος, (as Homer somewhere expresses it), this smoke will so dim the eyes of my soul, that I shall be able to see nothing clearly. For God's sake, if it be possible to avoid it, let us not provoke one another to wrath. Let us not kindle in each other this fire of hell; much less blow it up into a flame. If we could discern truth by that dreadful light, would it not be loss, rather than gain? For, how far is love, even with many wrong opinions, to be preferred before truth itself without love? We may die without the knowledge of many truths, and yet be carried into Abraham's bosom. But, if we die without love, what will knowledge avail? Just as much as it avails the devil and his angels!

The God of Love forbid we should ever make the trial! May he prepare us for the knowledge of all truth, by filling our hearts with all his love, and with all joy and peace in believing.

March, 1771. JOHN WESLEY.

SERMON I.

SALVATION BY FAITH;

PREACHED AT

ST. MARY'S, OXFORD, BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY, ON

JUNE 18, 1738.

"*By grace ye are saved through faith,*" Eph. ii. 8.

---

1. ALL the blessings which God hath bestowed upon man, are of his mere grace, bounty, or favour; his free, undeserved favour; favour altogether undeserved; man having no claim to the least of his mercies. It was free grace that "formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into him a living soul," and stamped on that soul the image of God, and "put all things under his feet." The same free grace continues to us at this day, life and breath, and all things. For there is nothing we are, or have, or do, which can deserve the least thing at God's hand, "All our works, thou, O God! hast wrought in us." These, therefore, are so many more instances of free mercy: and, whatever righteousness may be found in man, this is also the gift of God.

2. Wherewithal then shall a sinful man atone for any the least of his sins? With his own works? No. Were they ever so many or holy, they are not his own, but God's. But indeed they are all unholy and sinful themselves, so that every one of them needs a fresh atonement. Only corrupt

fruit grows on a corrupt tree. And his heart is altogether corrupt and abominable; being "come short of the glory of God," the glorious righteousness at first impressed on his soul, after the image of his great Creator. Therefore, having nothing, neither righteousness nor works to plead, his "mouth is utterly stopped before God."

3. If then sinful man find favour with God, it is "grace upon grace!" If God vouchsafe still to pour fresh blessings upon us, yea, the greatest of all blessings, salvation; what can we say to these things, but, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift!" And thus it is. Herein "God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died" to save us. "By grace, then, are ye saved, through faith." Grace is the source, faith the condition, of salvation.

Now, that we fall not short of the grace of God, it concerns us carefully to inquire,

I. What Faith it is through which we are saved?
II. What is the Salvation which is through faith?
III. How we may answer some Objections.

I. What Faith it is through which we are saved?

1. And first. It is not barely the faith of a heathen.

Now God requireth of a heathen to believe, "That God is: that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him;" and that he is to be sought by glorifying him as God, by giving him thanks for all things: and by a careful practice of moral virtue, of justice, mercy, and truth toward their fellow-creatures. A Greek or Roman, therefore, yea, a Scythian or Indian, was without excuse if he did not believe thus much: The Being and Attributes of God, a Future State of Reward and Punishment, and the Obligatory Nature of Moral Virtue. For this is barely the faith of a heathen.

2. Nor, secondly, Is it the faith of a devil, though this goes much farther than that of a heathen. For the devil believes, not only, that there is a wise and powerful God, gracious to reward, and just to punish; but also, that Jesus

is the Son of God, the Christ, the Saviour of the world. So we find him declaring, in express terms, Luke iv. 34, "I know Thee, who thou art, the Holy One of God." Nor can we doubt but that unhappy spirit believes all those words, which came out of the mouth of the Holy One; yea, and whatsoever else was written by those holy men of old; of two of them he was compelled to give that glorious testimony, "These men are the servants of the Most High God, who shew unto you the way of salvation." Thus much, then, the great Enemy of God and man believes, and trembles in believing, that "God was made manifest in the flesh;" that he will "tread all enemies under his feet;" and that, "all scripture was given by inspiration of God." Thus far goeth the faith of a devil.

3. Thirdly, The faith through which we are saved, in that sense of the word which will hereafter be explained, is not barely that which the Apostles themselves had while Christ was yet upon earth; though they so believed on him as to "leave all and follow him;" although they had then power to work miracles, to "heal all manner of sickness, and all manner of diseases;" yea, they had then "power and authority over all devils." And which is beyond all this, were sent by their Master to "preach the Kingdom of God."

4. What Faith is it then through which we are saved? It may be answered, first, in general, it is a faith in Christ; Christ, and God through Christ, are the proper object of it. Herein, therefore, it is sufficiently, absolutely distinguished from the faith, either of ancient or modern heathens. And from the faith of a devil, it is fully distinguished by this, it is not barely a speculative, rational thing, a cold, lifeless assent, a train of ideas in the head; but also a disposition of the heart. For thus saith the Scripture, "With the heart, man believeth unto righteousness" And, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe with thy heart, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

5. And herein does it differ from that faith which the

Apostles themselves had while our Lord was on earth, that it acknowledges the necessity and merit of his death, and the power of his resurrection. It acknowledges his death as the only sufficient mean of redeeming man from death eternal; and his resurrection, as the restoration of us to all life and immortality; inasmuch as "he was delivered for our sins, and rose again for our justification." Christian faith is then, not only an assent to the whole gospel of Christ, but also a full reliance on the Blood of Christ; a trust in the merits of his life, death, and resurrection; a recumbency upon him as our atonement and our life, *as given for us*, and *living in us*. It is a sure confidence which a man hath in God, that, through the merits of Christ, *his* sins are forgiven, and *he* reconciled to the favour of God; and, in consequence hereof, a closing with him, and cleaving to him, as our "Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption;" or, in one word, our Salvation.

II. What Salvation it is, which is through this Faith, is the second thing to be considered.

1. And first, Whatsoever else it imply, it is a present salvation. It is something attainable, yea, actually attained on earth, by those who are partakers of this faith. For thus saith the Apostle to the believers at Ephesus, and in them to the belivers of all ages, not ye shall be, (though that also is true) but "ye are saved through faith."

2. *Ye are saved* (to comprise all in one word) from sin. This is the salvation which is through faith. This is the great salvation foretold by the Angel, before God brought his First-begotten into the world, "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." And neither here, nor in other parts of Holy Writ, is there any limitation or restriction. All his people, or, as it is elsewhere expressed, "all that believe in him," he will save from all their sins; from original and actual, past and present sin, "of the flesh and of the spirit." Through faith that is in him, they are saved, both from the guilt and from the power of it.

3. First from the guilt of all past sin: for, whereas all the

world is guilty before God; insomuch, that should he "be extreme to mark what is done amiss, there is none that could abide it:" and whereas, "by the Law is only the knowledge of sin," but no deliverance from it; so that, "by fulfilling the deeds of the Law, no flesh can be justified in his sight:" now "the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, is manifested unto all that believe." Now, "they are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ." "Him God hath set forth to be a Propitiation, through faith, in his blood; to declare his righteousness for (or by) the remission of the sins that are past." Now hath Christ taken away "the curse of the Law, being made a Curse for us." He hath "blotted out the hand-writing that was against us, taking it out of the way, nailing it to his cross. There is, therefore, no condemnation now, to them which believe in Christ Jesus."

4. And being saved from guilt, they are saved from fear. Not indeed from a filial fear of offending; but, from all servile fear; from that fear which hath torment; from fear of punishment; from fear of the wrath of God, whom they no longer regard as a severe Master, but as an indulgent Father. "They have not received again the Spirit of bondage, but the Spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, Abba, Father: the Spirit itself also bearing witness with their spirits, that they are the children of God." They are also saved from the fear, though not from the possibility of falling away from the grace of God, and coming short of the great and precious promises: they are "sealed with the holy Spirit of Promise, which is the Earnest of their inheritance," Eph. i. 13. Thus have they "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. They rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And the love of God is shed abroad in their hearts, through the Holy Ghost, which is given unto them." And hereby they are persuaded, (though perhaps not at all times, nor with the same fulness of persuasion) that "neither death, nor life, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to

separate them from the Love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

5. Again, through this faith they are saved from the power of sin, as well as from the guilt of it. So the Apostle declares, "Ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins, and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him, sinneth not," 1 John iii. 5, &c. Again, "Little children, let no man deceive you. He that committeth sin is of the devil. Whosoever believeth, is born of God. And whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." Once more, "We know, that whosoever is born of God sinneth not: but he that is begotten of God, keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not," v. 18.

6. He that is, by faith, born of God, sinneth not, 1, by any habitual sin; for all habitual sin, is sin reigning: but sin cannot reign in any that believeth. Nor, 2, by any wilful sin, for his Will, while he abideth in the faith, is utterly set against all sin, and abhorreth it as deadly poison. Nor, 3, by any sinful desire; for he continually desireth the holy and perfect will of God; and any tendency to an unholy desire, he, by the grace of God, stifleth in the birth. Nor, 4, doth he sin by infirmities, whether in act, word, or thought: for his infirmities have no concurrence of his will; and without this they are not properly sins. Thus, "He that is born of God, doth not commit sin." And though he cannot say, he hath not sinned, yet, now "he sinneth not."

7. This then is the Salvation which is through Faith, even in the present world: a salvation from sin, and the consequences of sin, both often expressed in the word *justification;* which, taken in the largest sense, implies, a deliverance from guilt and punishment, by the Atonement of Christ actually applied to the soul of the sinner now believing on him, and a deliverance from the whole body of sin, through Christ, *formed in his heart.* So that he who is thus justified, or saved by faith, is indeed *born again.* He is *born again of the Spirit* unto a new life, "which is hid with

Christ in God." "He is a new creature: old things are passed away: all things in him are become new." And as a new-born babe he gladly receives the αδολον, "sincere milk of the word, and grows thereby:" going on in the might of the Lord his God, from faith to faith, from grace to grace, until, at length, he comes unto "a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

III. The first usual Objection to this is,

1. That to preach Salvation, or Justification by faith only, is to preach against Holiness and good Works. To which a short answer might be given: It would be so, if we spake as some do, of a faith which was separate from these: but we speak of a faith which is not so, but necessarily productive of all good works and all holiness.

2. But it may be of use to consider it more at large; especially since it is no new objection, but as old as St. Paul's time; for even then it was asked, "Do we not make void the Law through Faith?" We answer, first, All who preach not Faith, do manifestly make void the Law; either directly and grossly by limitations and comments, that eat out all the spirit of the Text; or, indirectly, by not pointing out the only means whereby it is possible to perform it. Whereas, secondly, "We establish the Law," both by shewing its full extent and spiritual meaning; and by calling all to that living way, whereby "the righteousness of the law may be fulfilled in them." These, while they trust in the blood of Christ alone, use all the ordinances which he hath appointed, do all the "good works which he had before prepared that they should walk therein," and enjoy and manifest all holy and heavenly tempers, even the same *mind that was in Christ Jesus*.

3. But does not preaching this faith lead men into pride? We answer, accidentally it may: therefore ought every believer to be earnestly cautioned, in the words of the great Apostle, "Because of unbelief, the first branches were broken off; and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear. If God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he spare not thee. Behold, therefore, the goodness

and severity of God! On them which fell, severity; but towards thee, goodness; if thou continue in his goodness, otherwise thou also shalt be cut off." And while he continues therein, he will remember those words of St. Paul, foreseeing and answering this very objection, Rom. iii. 27, "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what Law? Of Works. Nay, but by the Law of Faith. If a man were justified by his works, he would have whereof to glory." But there is no glorying for him, "that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly," Rom. iv. To the same effect are the words both preceding and following the text, Eph. ii. 4, &c. "God, who is rich in mercy, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved) that he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For, by grace ye are saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves." Of yourselves cometh neither your faith nor your salvation: "It is the gift of God;" the free, undeserved gift; the faith through which ye are saved, as well as the salvation, which he of his own good pleasure, his mere favour, annexes thereto. That ye believe, is one instance of his grace; that believing ye are saved, another. "Not of works, lest any man should boast." For all our works, all our righteousness, which were before our believing, merited nothing of God but condemnation. So far were they from deserving faith, which therefore, whenever given, is not *of works*. Neither is salvation of the works we do when we believe: for *it is* then *God that worketh in us:* and, therefore, that he giveth us a reward for what he himself worketh, only commendeth the riches of his mercy, but leaveth us nothing whereof to glory.

4. However, may not the speaking thus of the mercy of God, as saving or justifying freely by faith only, encourage men in sin? Indeed it may and will: many "will continue in sin that grace may abound:" But their blood is upon their own head. The goodness of God ought to lead them to repentance; and so it will those who are sincere of heart.

When they know there is yet forgiveness with him, they will cry aloud that he would blot out their sins also, through faith, which is in Jesus. And if they earnestly cry, and faint not; if they seek him in all the means he hath appointed; if they refuse to be comforted till he come, "he will come and will not tarry." And he can do much work in a short time. Many are the examples in the Acts of the Apostles, of God's shedding abroad this faith in men's hearts, even like lightning falling from heaven. So in the same hour that Paul and Silas began to preach, the jailor "repented, believed, and was baptized:" as were three thousand, by St. Peter, on the day of Pentecost, who all repented and believed at his first preaching. And blessed be God, there are now many living proofs, that he is still "mighty to save."

5. Yet to the same truth, placed in another view, a quite contrary objection is made: "If a man cannot be saved by all that he can do, this will drive men to despair." True, to despair of being saved by their own works, their own merits, or righteousness. And so it ought; for none can trust in the merits of Christ, till he has utterly renounced his own. He that "goeth about to establish his own righteousness," cannot receive the righteousness of God. The righteousness, which is of faith, cannot be given him while he trusteth in that which is of the law.

6. But this, it is said, is an uncomfortable doctrine. The devil spoke like himself, that is, without either truth or shame, when he dared to suggest to men that it is such. It is the only comfortable one, it is "very full of comfort," to all self-destroyed, self-condemned sinners. That, "whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed: that the same Lord over all, is rich unto all that call upon him." Here is comfort, high as heaven, stronger than death! What! Mercy for all? For Zaccheus, a public robber? For Mary Magdalene, a common harlot? Methinks I hear one say, Then I, even I, may hope for mercy! And so thou mayest, thou afflicted one, whom none hath comforted! God will not cast out thy prayer. Nay, perhaps he may say the next hour, "Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee;" so

forgiven, that they shall reign over thee no more: yea, and that "the Holy Spirit shall bear witness with thy spirit that thou art a child of God." O glad tidings! Tidings of great joy, which are sent unto all people. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters: Come ye, and buy, without money, and without price." Whatsoever your sins be, "though red, like crimson," though more than the hairs of your head: "return ye unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon you; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

7. When no more objections occur, then we are simply told, that salvation by faith only, ought not to be preached as the first doctrine, or, at least, not to be preached to all. But what saith the Holy Ghost? "Other foundation can no man lay, than that which is laid, even Jesus Christ." So then, that "whosoever believeth on him, shall be saved," is, and must be, the foundation of all our preaching, that is, must be preached first. "Well, but not to all." To whom then are we not to preach it? Whom shall we except? The poor! Nay, they have a peculiar right to have the gospel preached unto them. The unlearned? No. God hath revealed these things unto unlearned and ignorant men from the beginning. The young? By no means. *Suffer these*, in any wise, *to come unto Christ, and forbid them not.* The sinners? Least of all. "He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Why then, if any, we are to except the rich, the learned, the reputable, the moral men. And, it is true, they too often except themselves from hearing; yet we must speak the words of our Lord. For thus the tenor of our commission runs, "Go and preach the gospel to every creature." If any man wrest it, or any part of it, to his destruction, he must bear his own burden. But still, "as the Lord liveth, whatsoever the Lord saith unto us, that we will speak."

8. At this time, more especially, will we speak, that, "by grace ye are saved, through faith:" because, never was the maintaining this doctrine more seasonable than it is at this day. Nothing but this can effectually prevent the in-

'crease of the Romish delusion among us. It is endless to attack, one by one, all the errors of that Church. But Salvation by Faith strikes at the root, and all fall at once where this is established. It was this doctrine, which our Church justly calls *the strong Rock and Foundation of the Christian Religion*, that first drove Popery out of these kingdoms, and it is this alone can keep it out. Nothing but this can give a check to that immorality, which hath "overspread the land as a flood." Can you empty the great deep, drop by drop? Then you may reform us, by dissuasives from particular vices. But let the "righteousness, which is of God, by faith," be brought in, and so shall its proud waves be stayed. Nothing but this can stop the mouths of those who "glory in their shame, and openly deny the Lord that bought them." They can talk as sublimely of the Law as he that hath it written, by God, in his heart. To hear them speak on this head, might incline one to think, they were not far from the kingdom of God: but, take them out of the law into the gospel; begin with the righteousness of faith; with Christ, "the end of the law, to every one that believeth;" and those who but now appeared almost, if not altogether, Christians, stand, confessed, the sons of perdition; as far from life and salvation (God be merciful unto them!) as the depth of hell from the height of heaven.

9. For this reason the Adversary so rages, whenever "Salvation by Faith" is declared to the world: for this reason did he stir up earth and hell, to destroy those who first preached it. And for the same reason, knowing that faith alone could overturn the foundations of his kingdom, did he call forth all his forces, and employ all his arts of lies and calumny, to affright that champion of the Lord of Hosts, Martin Luther, from reviving it. Nor can we wonder thereat; for, as that man of God observes, "How would it enrage a proud, strong man armed, to be stopped, and set at nought, by a little child coming against him with a reed in his hand?" Especially, when he knew that little child

would surely overthrow him, and tread him under foot. Even so, Lord Jesus! Thus hath thy strength been ever "made perfect in weakness!" Go forth then, thou little child, that believest in him, and "his right hand shall teach thee terrible things!" Though thou art helpless and weak as an infant of days, the strong man shall not be able to stand before thee. Thou shalt prevail over him, and subdue him, and overthrow him, and trample him under thy feet. Thou shalt march on, under the great Captain of thy Salvation, "conquering and to conquer," until all thine enemies are destroyed, and "death is swallowed up in victory."

"Now, thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ," to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON II.

THE ALMOST CHRISTIAN:

PREACHED AT

ST. MARY'S, OXFORD, BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY, ON

JULY 25, 1741.

"*Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian,*"
Acts xxvi. 26.

AND many there are who go thus far: ever since the Christian Religion was in the world, there have been many in every age and nation, who were "almost persuaded to be Christians." But seeing it avails nothing before God, to go *only thus far*, it highly imports us to consider,

First, What is implied in being *almost;*
Secondly, What in being *altogether a Christian.*

I. 1. Now, in the being *almost a Christian* is implied, first, Heathen Honesty. No one, I suppose, will make any question of this; especially, since by heathen honesty here, I mean, not that which is recommended in the writings of their philosophers only, but such as the common heathens expected one of another, and many of them actually practised. By the rules of this they were taught, that they ought not to be unjust: not to take away their neighbour's goods, either by robbery or theft: not to oppress the poor, neither to use extortion toward any: not to cheat or over-reach either the poor or rich, in whatsoever commerce they had with them: to defraud no man of his right; and, if it were possible, to owe no man any thing.

2. Again, the common heathens allowed, that some regard was to be paid to truth as well as to justice. And, accordingly, they not only held him in abomination, who was forsworn, who called God to witness to a lie; but him also, who was known to be a slanderer of his neighbour, who falsely accused any man. And, indeed, little better did they esteem wilful liars of any sort, accounting them the disgrace of human kind, and the pests of society.

3. Yet, again, there was a sort of love and assistance, which they expected one from another. They expected whatever assistance any one could give another, without prejudice to himself. And this they extended not only to those little offices of humanity, which are performed without any expense or labour; but likewise, to the feeding the hungry, if they had food to spare; the clothing the naked, with their own superfluous raiment: and, in general, the giving to any that needed, such things as they needed not themselves. Thus far, in the lowest account of it, heathen honesty went, the first thing implied in the being *almost a Christian*.

II. 4. A second thing implied in the being *almost a Christian*, is the having a Form of Godliness, of that godliness which is prescribed in the gospel of Christ; the having the *outside of a real Christian*. Accordingly, the *Almost Christian* does nothing which the gospel forbids. He taketh not the name of God in vain: he blesseth and curseth not: he sweareth not at all, but his communication is yea, yea; nay, nay. He profanes not the day of the Lord, nor suffers it to be profaned, even by the stranger that is within his gates. He not only avoids all actual adultery, fornication, and uncleanness, but every word or look, that either directly or indirectly tends thereto: nay, and all idle words, abstaining both from all detraction, backbiting, tale-bearing, evil-speaking, and from "all foolish talking and jesting," as speaking a kind of virtue in the heathen moralist's account. Likewise, from all conversation that is not "good to the use of edifying:" and that, consequently, "grieves the

Holy Spirit of God, whereby we are sealed to the day of redemption."

5. He abstains from "wine wherein is excess;" from revellings and gluttony. He avoids, as much as in him lies, all strife and contention, continually endeavouring to live peaceably with all men. And, if he suffers wrong, he avengeth not himself, neither returns evil for evil. He is no railer, no brawler, no scoffer, either at the faults or infirmities of his neighbour. He does not willingly wrong, hurt, or grieve any man; but in all things acts and speaks by that plain rule, "Whatsoever thou wouldest not he should do unto thee, that do not thou to another."

6. And, in doing good, he does not confine himself to cheap and easy offices of kindness, but labours and suffers for the profit of many, that by all means he may help some. In spite of toil or pain, "Whatsoever his hand findeth to do, he doeth it with all his might;" whether it be for his friends, or for his enemies; for the evil, or for the good. For, being *not slothful in this*, or in any *business*, *as he hath opportunity he doth good*, all manner of good, *to all men;* and to their souls as well as their bodies. He reproves the wicked, instructs the ignorant, confirms the wavering, quickens the good, and comforts the afflicted. He labours to awaken those that sleep, to lead those whom God hath already awakened, to the Fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness, that they may wash therein and be clean; and to stir up those who are saved through faith, to adorn the gospel of Christ in all things.

7. He that hath the form of godliness, uses the means of grace; yea, all of them, and at all opportunities. He constantly frequents the house of God; and that, not as the manner of some is, who come into the presence of the Most High, either loaded with gold and costly apparel, or in all the gaudy vanity of dress; and either by their unseasonable civilities to each other, or the impertinent gaiety of their behaviour, disclaim all pretensions to the form, as well as the power of godliness. Would to God there were none even among ourselves who fall under the same condemnation:

who come into this house, it may be, gazing about, or with all the signs of the most listless, careless indifference, though sometimes they may *seem* to use a prayer to God for his blessing on what they are entering upon; who, during that awful service, are either asleep or reclined in the most convenient posture for it; or, as though they supposed God was asleep, talking with one another, or looking round, as utterly void of employment. Neither let these be accused of the form of godliness. No; he who has even this, behaves with seriousness and attention, in every part of the solemn service. More especially when he approaches the table of the Lord, it is not with a light or careless behaviour, but with an air, gesture, and deportment which speaks nothing else, but "God, be merciful to me a sinner."

8. To this, if we add, the constant use of family-prayer, by those who are masters of families, and the setting times apart for private addresses to God, with a daily seriousness of behaviour: he who uniformly practises this outward religion, has the form of godliness. There needs but one thing more in order to his being *almost a Christian*, and that is, Sincerity.

III. 9. By Sincerity, I mean, a real, inward principle of Religion, from whence these outward actions flow. And, indeed, if we have not this, we have not heathen honesty; no, not so much of it as will answer the demand of a heathen epicurean poet. Even this poor wretch, in his sober intervals, is able to testify,

> *Oderunt peccare boni, virtutis amore;*
> *Oderunt peccare mali, formidine pœnæ.*[*]

So that, if a man only abstain from doing evil in order to avoid punishment, *Non pœnes, in cruce curvus,*[+] saith the Pagan; there, "Thou hast thy reward." But even he will

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[*] Good men avoid sin from the love of virtue:
Wicked men avoid sin from a fear of punishment.

[+] Thou shalt not be hanged.

not allow such a harmless man as this, to be so much as a *good heathen.* If then, any man, from the same motive, viz. to avoid punishment, to avoid the loss of his friends, or his gain, or his reputation, should not only abstain from doing evil, but also do ever so much good; yea, and use all the means of grace; yet we could not, with any propriety, say, This man is even *almost a Christian.* If he have no better principle in his heart, he is only a hypocrite altogether.

10. Sincerity, therefore, is necessarily implied in the being *almost a Christian:* a real design to serve God, a hearty desire to do his will: it is necessarily implied, that a man have a sincere view of pleasing God in all things: in all his conversation; in all his actions; in all he does, or leaves undone. This design, if any man be *almost a Christian,* runs through the whole tenor of his life. This is the moving principle, both in his doing good, his abstaining from evil, and his using the ordinances of God.

11. But here it will probably be inquired, Is it possible, that any man living, should go so far as this, and, nevertheless, be *only almost a Christian?* What more than this can be implied, in the being *a Christian altogether?* I answer, first, That it is possible to go thus far, and yet be but *almost a Christian:* I learn, not only from the Oracles of God, but also from the sure testimony of experience.

12. Brethren, great is "my boldness towards you in this behalf." And "forgive me this wrong," if I declare my own folly upon the house-top, for your's and the gospel's sake. Suffer me, then, to speak freely of myself, even as of another man. I am content to be abased, so ye may be exalted, and to be yet more vile, for the glory of my Lord.

13. I did go thus far for many years, as many of this place can testify; using diligence to eschew all evil, and to have a conscience void of offence; redeeming the time; buying up every opportunity of doing all good to all men; constantly and carefully using all the public and all the private means of grace; endeavouring, after a steady seriousness of behaviour, at all times, and in all places: and God

is my record, before whom I stand, doing all this in sincerity; having a real design to serve God; a hearty desire to do his will in all things; to please him, who had called me to "fight the good fight," and to "lay hold on eternal life." Yet my own conscience beareth me witness, in the Holy Ghost, that all this time I was but *almost a Christian.*

II. If it be inquired, What more than this is implied in the being *altogether a Christian?* I answer,

I. 1. First, The Love of God. For thus saith his word, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." Such a love of God is this, as engrosses the whole heart, as takes up all the affections, as fills the entire capacity of the soul, and employs the utmost extent of all its faculties. He that thus loves the Lord his God, his spirit continually "rejoiceth in God his Saviour." His delight is in the Lord, his Lord and his All, to whom, "in every thing, he giveth thanks. All his desire is unto God, and to the remembrance of his name." His heart is ever crying out, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee." Indeed, what can he desire beside God? Not the world, or the things of the world. For he is "crucified to the world, and the world crucified to him." He is crucified to the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, and the pride of life. Yea, he is dead to pride of every kind; for "love is not puffed up;" but "he that dwelling in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him," is less than nothing in his own eyes.

II. 2. The second thing implied in the being *altogether a Christian*, is, The love of our neighbour. For thus said our Lord, in the following words, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." If any man ask who is my neighbour; we reply, every man in the world; every child of his who is the Father of the spirits of all flesh. Nor may we in any wise except our enemies, or the enemies of God and their own souls. But every Christian loveth these also as himself, yea, "as Christ loveth us." He that would more fully understand what manner of love this is, may consider

St. Paul's description of it. It is "long-suffering and kind. It envieth not. It is not rash or hasty in judging. It is not puffed up," but maketh him, that loves, the least, the servant of all. Love "doth not behave itself unseemly, but becometh all things to all men." She "seeketh not her own," but only the good of others, that they may be saved. "Love is not provoked." It casteth out wrath, which he who hath, is not "made perfect in love. It thinketh no evil. It rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth. It covereth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

III. 3. There is yet one thing more that may be separately considered, though it cannot actually be separate from the preceding, which is implied in the being *altogether a Christian*, and that is the ground of all, even Faith. Very excellent things are spoken of this throughout the Oracles of God. "Every one," said the beloved disciple, "that believeth, is born of God. To as many as received him, gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name. And, this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Yea, our Lord himself declares, "He that believeth in the Son, hath everlasting life; and cometh not into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life."

4. But here let no man deceive his own soul. "It is diligently to be noted, the faith which bringeth not forth repentance, and love, and all good works, is not that right living faith which is here spoken of, but a dead and devilish one. For, even the devils believe that Christ was born of a virgin, that he wrought all kinds of miracles, declaring himself very God: that, for our sakes, he suffered a most painful death, to redeem us from death everlasting: that he rose again the third day; that he ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right-hand of the Father, and at the end of the world, shall come again to judge both the quick and dead. These articles of our faith the devils believe, and so they believe all that is written in the Old and New Testament. And yet, for all this faith, they be but devils. They remain

still in their damnable estate, lacking the very true Christian faith."*

5. "The right and true Christian faith is," to go on in the words of our own Church, "not only to believe, that holy Scripture, and the Articles of our Faith are true, but also to have a sure trust and confidence, to be saved from everlasting damnation by Christ. It is a sure trust and confidence which a man hath in God, that, by the merits of Christ, his sins are forgiven, and he reconciled to the favour of God; whereof doth follow, a loving heart, to obey his commandments."

6. Now, whosoever hath this faith, which *purifies the heart*, (by the power of God, who *dwelleth therein)*, from pride, anger, desire, *from all unrighteousness*, from *all filthiness of flesh and spirit;* which fills it with love stronger than death, both to God and to all mankind; love that doth the works of God, glorying to spend and be spent for all men, and that endureth with joy, not only the reproach of Christ, the being mocked, despised, and hated of all men, but whatsoever the wisdom of God permits the malice of men or devils to inflict; whosoever has this *faith*, thus *working by love*, is not *almost only*, *but altogether a Christian.*

7. But who are the living witnesses of these things? I beseech you, brethren, as in the presence of that God, before whom "hell and destruction are without a covering; how much more the hearts of the children of men:" that each of you would ask his own heart, "Am I of that number? Do I so far practise justice, mercy, and truth, as even the rules of heathen honesty require? If so, have I the very *outside* of a Christian? The form of godliness? Do I abstain from evil, from whatsoever is forbidden in the written word of God? Do I, whatever good my hand findeth to do, do it with my might? Do I seriously use all the ordinances of God at all opportunities? And, is all this

* Homily on the Salvation of Man.

done, with a sincere design and desire to please God in all things?

8. Are not many of you conscious, that you never came thus far? that you have not been even *almost a Christian.* That you have not come up to the standard of heathen honesty; at least, not to the form of Christian godliness: Much less hath God seen sincerity in you, a real design of pleasing him in all things. You never so much as intended to devote all your words and works, your business, studies, diversions, to his glory. You never even designed or desired, that whatsoever you did should be "done in the name of the Lord Jesus," and as such, should be "a spiritual sacrifice, acceptable to God through Christ."

9. But, supposing you had, do good designs and good desires make a Christian? By no means, unless they are brought to good effect. "Hell is paved (saith one) with good intentions." The great question of all, then, still remains. Is the love of God shed abroad in your heart? Can you cry out, "My God and my All!" Do you desire nothing but him? Are you happy in God? Is he your glory, your delight, your crown of rejoicing? And is this commandment written in your heart, That he who loveth God love his brother also? Do you then love your neighbour as yourself? Do you love every man, even your enemies, even the enemies of God, as your own soul? As Christ loved you? Yea, dost thou believe that Christ loved thee, and gave himself for thee? Hast thou faith in his blood? Believest thou the Lamb of God hath taken away thy sins, and cast them as a stone into the depth of the sea? That he hath blotted out the hand-writing that was against thee, taking it out of the way, nailing it to his cross? Hast thou indeed redemption through his blood, even the remission of thy sins? And doth his Spirit bear witness with thy spirit, that thou art a child of God?

10. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who now standeth in the midst of us, knoweth, that if any man die without this faith and this love, good it were for him that he had never been born. Awake, then, thou that

sleepest, and call upon thy God: call in the day when he may be found. Let him not rest, till he "make his goodness to pass before thee," till he proclaim unto thee the name of the Lord. "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin." Let no man persuade thee by vain words, to rest short of this prize of thy high calling. But cry unto him day and night, who, "while we were without strength, died for the ungodly," until thou knowest in whom thou hast believed, and canst say, "My Lord, and my God!" Remember, "always to pray, and not to faint," till thou also canst lift up thy hand unto heaven, and declare to him that liveth for ever and ever, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee."

11. May we all thus experience what it is, to be not almost only, but altogether Christians! Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus: knowing we have peace with God through Jesus Christ: rejoicing in hope of the glory of God, and having the love of God shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost given unto us!

SERMON III.

AWAKE, THOU THAT SLEEPEST.

PREACHED ON

SUNDAY, APRIL 4, 1742, before the UNIVERSITY of OXFORD,

BY CHARLES WESLEY, M. A.

Student of Christ-Church.

"*Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee Light,*" Eph. v. 14.

IN discoursing on these words, I shall, with the help of God,

First, Describe the Sleepers, to whom they are spoken.

Secondly, Enforce the exhortation, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead." And,

Thirdly, Explain the Promise made to such as do "awake and arise; Christ shall give thee Light."

I. 1. And first, as to the Sleepers here spoken to. By sleep is signified the natural state of man: that deep sleep of the soul, into which the sin of Adam hath cast all who spring from his loins; that supineness, indolence, and stupidity; that insensibility of his real condition, wherein every man comes into the world, and continues till the voice of God awake him.

2. Now, "they that sleep, sleep in the night." The state of nature, is a state of utter darkness; a state wherein "darkness covers the earth, and gross darkness the people." The poor unawakened sinner, how much knowledge soever he may have as to other things, has no knowledge of him-

self: in this respect "he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know." He knows not that he is a fallen spirit, whose only business, in the present world, is to recover from his fall, to regain that image of God wherein he was created. He sees *no necessity* for *the one thing needful*, even that inward, universal change, that "birth from above," figured out by baptism, which is the beginning of that total renovation; that sanctification of spirit, soul, and body, "without which no man shall see the Lord."

3. Full of all diseases as he is, he fancies himself in perfect health: fast bound in misery and iron, he dreams that he is happy, and at liberty. He says, "Peace! Peace!" while the devil, "as a strong man armed," is in full possession of his soul. He sleeps on still, and takes his rest, though hell is moved from beneath to meet him; though the pit, from whence there is no return, hath opened its mouth to swallow him up: a fire is kindled around him, yet he knoweth it not; yea, it burns him, yet he lays it not to heart.

4. By one who sleeps, we are, therefore, to understand (and would to God we might all understand it!) a sinner satisfied in his sins; contented to remain in his fallen state, to live and die without the image of God: one, who is ignorant both of his disease, and of the only remedy for it: one who never was warned, or never regarded the warning voice of God, "to flee from the wrath to come": one that never yet saw he was in danger of hell-fire, or cried out in the earnestness of his soul, "What must I do to be saved?"

5. If this sleeper be not outwardly vicious, his sleep is usually the deepest of all: whether he be of the Laodicean spirit, "neither cold nor hot;" but a quiet, rational, inoffensive, good-natured professor of the religion of his fathers; or, whether he be zealous and orthodox, and, "after the straitest sect of our religion, live a Pharisee;" that is, according to the scriptural account, one that *justifies himself*; one that labours *to establish his own righteousness*, as the ground of his acceptance with God.

6. This is he, who, "having a form of godliness, denies

the power thereof;" yea, and probably reviles it, wheresoever it is found, as mere extravagance and delusion. Meanwhile, the wretched self-deceiver thanks God, that he "is not as other men are; adulterers, unjust, extortioners:" no, he doth no wrong to any man. He *fasts twice in a week*, uses all the means of grace, is constant at church and sacrament: yea, and *gives tythes of all that he has;* does all the good that he can: *touching the righteousness of the Law*, he is *blameless:* he wants nothing of godliness, but the power; nothing of religion, but the spirit; nothing of Christianity, but the truth and the life.

7. But know ye not, that however highly esteemed, among men, *such a Christian* as this may be, he is an abomination in the sight of God, and a heir of every woe, which the Son of God, yesterday, to-day, and for ever, denounces against *Scribes, Pharisees, and Hypocrites.* He hath "made clean the outside of the cup and the platter," but, within, is full of all filthiness. "An evil disease cleaveth still unto him, so that his inward parts are very wickedness." Our Lord fitly compares him to a *painted sepulchre*, which "appears beautiful without;" but, nevertheless, is "full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness." The bones indeed are no longer dry; the sinews and flesh are come upon them, and the skin covers them above: but there is no breath in them, no Spirit of the living God. And, "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." "Ye are Christ's, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you:" but, if not, God knoweth that ye abide in death, even until now.

8. This is another character of the Sleeper here spoken to. He abides in death, though he knows it not. He is dead unto God, "dead in trespasses and sins. For, "to be carnally minded is death." Even as it is written, "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin: and so death passed upon all men," not only temporal death, but likewise spiritual and eternal. "In that day that thou eatest, (said God to Adam) thou shalt surely die." Not bodily, (unless as he then became mortal) but spiritually:

thou shalt lose the life of thy soul; thou shalt die to God; shalt be separated from him, thy essential life and happiness.

9. Thus first was dissolved the vital union of our soul with God: insomuch, that *in the midst of* natural *life, we are* now *in* spiritual *death*. And herein we remain till the Second Adam becomes a quickening Spirit to us, till he raises the dead, the dead in sin, in pleasure, riches, or honours. But, before any dead soul can live, he *hears* (hearkens to) *the voice of the Son of God:* he is made sensible of his lost estate, and receives the sentence of death in himself. He knows himself to be *dead while he liveth;* dead to God, and all the things of God: having no more power to perform the actions of a living Christian, than a dead body to perform the functions of a living man.

10. And most certain it is, that, one dead in sin, has not "senses exercised to discern spiritual good and evil." "Having eyes, he sees not; he hath ears, and hears not." He doth not "taste and see that the Lord is gracious." He "hath not seen God at any time, nor heard his voice, nor handled the word of life." In vain is the name of Jesus "like ointment poured forth, and all his garments smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia." The soul that sleepeth in death, hath no perception of any objects of this kind. His heart is *past feeling*, and understandeth none of these things.

11. And hence, having no spiritual senses, no inlets of spiritual knowledge, the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; nay, he is so far from receiving them, that whatsoever is spiritually discerned, is mere foolishness unto him. He is not content with being utterly ignorant of spiritual things, but he denies the very existence of them. And spiritual sensation itself is to him, the foolishness of folly. "How, (saith he) can these things be?" How can any man *know*, that he is alive to God? Even as you know, that your body is now alive? Faith is the life of the soul: and, if ye have this life abiding in you, ye want no marks to evidence it *to yourself*, but that ελεγχος Πνευματος, that divine

consciousness, that *witness of* God, which is more and greater than ten thousand human witnesses.

12. If he do not now bear witness with thy spirit, that thou art a child of God, O that he might convince thee, thou poor unawakened sinner, by his demonstration and power, that thou art a child of the devil! O that, as I prophesy, there might now be "noise and a shaking;" and may "the bones come together, bone to his bone!" Then, "come from the four winds, O Breath! and breathe on these slain, that they may live!" And do not ye harden your hearts, and resist the Holy Ghost, who even now is come to *convince* you *of sin*, "because you believe not on the name of the only begotten Son of God."

II. 1. Wherefore, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead." God calleth thee now by my mouth; and bids thee know thyself, thou fallen spirit, thy true state and only concern below. "What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise! Call upon thy God, if so be thy God will think upon thee, that thou perish not." A mighty tempest is stirred up round about thee, and thou art sinking into the depths of perdition, the gulf of God's judgments. If thou would escape them, cast thyself into them. "Judge thyself, and thou shalt not be judged of the Lord."

2. Awake, awake! Stand up this moment, lest thou "drink at the Lord's hand the cup of his fury." Stir up thyself "to lay hold on the Lord, the Lord thy Righteousness, mighty to save! Shake thyself from the dust." At least, let the earthquake of God's threatenings shake thee. Awake, and cry out with the trembling jailer, "What must I do to be saved?" And never rest, till thou believe on the Lord Jesus, with a faith which is his gift, by the operation of his Spirit.

3. If I speak to any one of you, more than to another, it is to thee, who thinkest thyself unconcerned in this exhortation. "I have a message from God unto thee." In his name, I *warn* thee *to flee from the wrath to come*. Thou unholy soul, see thy picture in condemned Peter, lying in the dark dungeon, between the soldiers, bound with two

chains, the keepers before the door keeping the prison. The night is far spent, the morning is at hand, when thou art to be brought forth to execution. And in these dreadful circumstances, thou art fast asleep; thou art fast asleep in the devil's arms, on the brink of the pit, in the jaws of everlasting destruction!

4. O may the Angel of the Lord come upon thee, and the light shine into thy prison! And mayest thou feel the stroke of an Almighty Hand, raising thee, with, "Arise up quickly, gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals, cast thy garment about thee, and follow me."

5. Awake, thou everlasting spirit! out of thy dream of worldly happiness. Did not God create thee for himself? Then, thou canst not rest, till thou rest in him. Return, thou wanderer. Fly back to thy ark. This is not thy home. Think not of building tabernacles here. Thou art but a stranger, a sojourner upon earth: a creature of a day, but just launching out into an unchangeable state. Make haste. Eternity is at hand. Eternity depends on this moment. An eternity of happiness, or an eternity of misery!

6. In what state is thy soul? Was God, while I am yet speaking, to require it of thee, art thou ready to meet death and judgment? Canst thou stand in his sight, "who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity?" Art thou "meet to be partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light?" Hast thou "fought a good fight, and kept the faith?" Hast thou secured the one thing needful? Hast thou recovered the image of God, even righteousness and true holiness? Hast thou put off the old man, and put on the new? Art thou clothed upon with Christ?

7. Hast thou oil in thy lamp? Grace in thy heart? Dost thou "love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy mind, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength?" Is that mind in thee, which was also in Christ Jesus? Art thou a Christian indeed? That is, a new creature. Are old things passed away, and all things become new?

8. Art thou "a partaker of the divine nature? Knowest

thou not, that Christ is in thee, except thou be reprobate!" Knowest thou, that God "dwelleth in thee, and thou in God, by his Spirit, which he hath given thee?" Knowest thou that "thy body is a temple of the Holy Ghost, which thou hast of God?" Hast thou the witness in thyself? The earnest of thine inheritance? Art thou "sealed by that Spirit of Promise, unto the day of redemption?" Hast thou received the Holy Ghost? Or, dost thou start at the question, not knowing whether there be any Holy Ghost?

9. If it offend thee, be thou assured, that thou neither art a Christian, nor desirest to be one. Nay, thy very prayer is turned into sin; and thou hast solemnly mocked God this very day, by praying for the inspiration of his Holy Spirit, when thou didst not believe there was any such thing to be received.

10. Yet, on the authority of God's Word, and our own Church, I must repeat the question, "Hast thou received the Holy Ghost?" If thou hast not, thou art not yet a Christian. For a Christian is a man, that is "anointed with the Holy Ghost, and with power." Thou art not yet made a partaker of pure religion and undefiled. Dost thou know what religion is? That it is a participation of the divine nature, the life of God in the soul of man: "Christ formed in the heart, Christ in thee, the hope of glory." Happiness and holiness; heaven begun upon earth. "A kingdom of God within thee: not meat and drink," no outward thing; "but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost?" An everlasting kingdom brought into thy soul; a "peace of God, that passeth all understanding; a joy unspeakable, and full of glory?"

11. Knowest thou, that "in Jesus Christ, neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith that worketh by love;" but a new creation? Seest thou the necessity of that inward change, that spiritual birth, that life from the dead? That holiness? And art thou thoroughly convinced, that without it, no man shall see the Lord? Art thou labouring after it? "Giving all diligence, to make thy calling and election sure? Working out thy salvation

with fear and trembling? Agonizing to enter in at the strait gate!" Art thou in earnest about thy soul? And, canst thou tell the Searcher of hearts, "Thou, O God, art the thing that I long for!" Lord, thou knowest all things! Thou knowest that I *would* love thee!

12. Thou hopest to be saved; but what reason hast thou to give of the hope that is in thee? Is it because thou hast done no harm? Or, because thou hast done much good? Or, because thou art not like other men; but wise, or learned, or honest, and morally good? Esteemed of men, and of a fair reputation? Alas! all this will never bring thee to God. It is in his account lighter than vanity. Dost thou know Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent? Hath he taught thee, that, "by grace we are saved, through faith; and that not of ourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast?" Hast thou received the faithful saying, as the whole foundation of thy hope, "that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners?" Hast thou learned what that meaneth, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance? I am not sent, but to the lost sheep?" Art thou (he that heareth, let him understand!) lost, dead, *damned already?* Dost thou know thy deserts? Dost thou feel thy wants? Art thou *poor in spirit? Mourning* for God, and refusing to be comforted? Is the prodigal *come to himself*, and well content to be, therefore, thought *beside himself*; by those who are still feeding upon the husks which he hath left? Art thou willing to live godly in Christ Jesus? And dost thou, therefore, suffer persecution? Do men say all manner of evil against thee falsely, for the Son of Man's sake?

13. O, that in all these questions ye may hear the voice that wakes the dead, and feel that hammer of the word, which breaketh the rocks in pieces! "If ye will hear his voice to-day, while it is called to-day, harden not your hearts." Now, *awake, thou that sleepest* in spiritual death, that thou sleep not in death eternal! Feel thy lost estate, and *arise from the dead.* Leave thine old companions in sin and death. Follow thou Jesus, and let the dead bury their

dead. "Save thyself from this untoward generation. Come out from among them, and be thou separate, and touch not the unclean thing, and the Lord shall receive thee, Christ shall give thee Light."

III. 1. This Promise, I come, lastly, to explain. And how encouraging a consideration is this, that whosoever thou art, who obeyest his call, thou canst not seek his face in vain. If thou even now *awake and arise from the dead*, he hath bound himself to *give thee light*. *The Lord shall give* thee *grace and glory;* the light of his grace here, and the light of his glory, when thou receivest the crown that fadeth not away. "Thy light shall break forth as the morning, and thy darkness be as the noon-day. God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shall shine in thy heart; to give the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." "On them that fear the Lord shall the Sun of Righteousness arise, with healing in his wings." And in that day it shall be said unto thee, "Arise, shine: for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." For Christ shall reveal himself in thee. And he is the true Light.

2. God is Light, and will give himself to every awakened sinner, that waiteth for him: and thou shalt then be a temple of the living God, and Christ shall "dwell in thy heart by faith:" and, "being rooted and grounded in love, thou shalt be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of that love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that thou mayest be filled with all the fulness of God."

3. Ye see your calling, brethren. We are called to be "a habitation of God through his Spirit:" and through his Spirit dwelling in us, to be saints here, and partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. So exceedingly great are the promises which are given unto us, actually given unto us who believe. For, by faith, "we receive, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit, which is of God," the sum of all the promises, "that we may know the things that are freely given to us of God."

4. The Spirit of Christ is that great gift of God, which at sundry times, and in divers manners he hath promised to man, and hath fully bestowed since the time that Christ was glorified. Those promises before made to the fathers, he hath thus fulfilled: "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes.* I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will your my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring."†

5. Ye may all be living witnesses of these things: of remission of sins, and the gift of the Holy Ghost. "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." "Who among you is there, that feareth the Lord, and yet walketh on in darkness, and hath no light?" I ask thee, in the name of Jesus, believest thou that his arm is not shortened at all? That he is still mighty to save? That he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever? That he hath now power, on earth, to forgive sins? "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven." God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven thee. Receive this, "not as the word of man; but as it is, indeed, the word of God;" and thou art justified freely, through faith. Thou shalt be sanctified also through faith, which is in Jesus, and shalt set to thy seal, even thine, that "God hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son."

6. Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you. And suffer ye the word of exhortation, even from one the least esteemed in the Church. Your conscience beareth you witness in the Holy Ghost, that these things are so, if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. "This is eternal life, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent." This experimental knowledge, and this alone, is true Christianity. He is a Christian, who hath received the Spirit of Christ. He is not a Christian, who hath not received him. Neither is it possible to have received him, and not know it. "For, at that day, (when he cometh, saith our Lord) ye

* Ezek. xxxvi. 27. † Isaiah xliv. 3.

shall know, that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. This is that Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him. But ye know him: for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you," John xiv. 20.

7. The world cannot receive him, but utterly reject the Promise of the Father, contradicting and blaspheming. But every spirit, which confesseth not this, is not of God. Yea, "this is that spirit of Antichrist, whereof ye have heard, that it should come into the world, and even now it is in the world." He is Antichrist whosoever denies the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, or that the indwelling Spirit of God is the common privilege of all believers, the blessing of the gospel, the unspeakable gift, the universal promise, the criterion of a real Christian.

8. It nothing helps them to say, "We do not deny the *assistance* of God's Spirit; but only this *inspiration*, this *receiving the Holy Ghost*, and being *sensible* of it. It is only this *feeling of the* Spirit, this being *moved* by the Spirit, or *filled* with it, which we deny to have any place in sound religion." But, in *only denying this*, you deny the whole Scriptures, the whole Truth, and Promise, and Testimony of God.

9. Our own excellent Church knows nothing of this devilish distinction: but speaks plainly of "feeling the Spirit of Christ;"* of being "moved by the Holy Ghost,"† and knowing and "feeling there is no other name than that of Jesus," whereby we can receive life and salvation. She teaches us all to pray for the "inspiration of the Holy Spirit;"‡ yea, that we may be "filled with the Holy Ghost."§ Nay, and every Presbyter of her's professes to receive the Holy Ghost by the imposition of hands.‖ Therefore, to deny any of these, is, in effect, to renounce the Church of England, as well as the whole Christian Revelation.

* Art. 17. † Office of consecrating Priests. ‡ Visitation of the Sick.
§ Collect before the Holy Communion. ‖ Order of Confirmation.

10. But *the wisdom of God* was always *foolishness with men.* No marvel then, that the great mystery of the gospel, should be now also "hid from the wise and prudent," as well as in the days of old: that it should be almost universally denied, ridiculed, and exploded, as mere frenzy: and that all who dare avow it still, are branded with the names of madmen and enthusiasts! This is *that falling away* which was to come: that general apostasy, of all orders and degrees of men, which we even now find to have overspread the earth. "Run to and fro in the streets of Jerusalem, and see if ye can find a man," a man that loveth the Lord his God with all his heart, and serveth him with all his strength. How does our own land mourn (to look no farther) under the overflowings of ungodliness! What villanies of every kind are committed day by day: yea, too often with impunity, by those who sin with a high hand, and glory in their shame! Who can reckon up the oaths, curses, profaneness, blasphemies; the lying, slandering, evil-speaking; the sabbath-breaking, gluttony, drunkenness, revenge; the whoredoms, adulteries, and various uncleanness; the frauds, injustice, oppression, extortion, which overspread our land as a flood?

11. And even among those who have kept themselves pure from these grosser abominations; how much anger and pride, how much sloth and idleness, how much softness and effeminacy, how much luxury and self-indulgence, how much covetousness and ambition, how much thirst of praise, how much love of the world, how much fear of man is to be found! Mean-while, how little of true religion! For, where is he that loveth either God or his neighbour, as he hath given us commandment? On the one hand, are those who have not so much as the form of godliness: on the other, those who have the form only; there stands the *open*, there the *painted* sepulchre. So that in very deed, whosoever were earnestly to behold any public gathering together of the people, (I fear, those in our churches are not to be excepted,) might easily perceive, "that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees:" the one having al-

most as little concern about religion, as if there were *no Resurrection, neither Angel nor Spirit;* and the other, make it a mere lifeless form, a dull round of external performances, without either true faith, or the love of God, or joy in the Holy Ghost!

12. Would to God I could except *us* of this place! "Brethren, my heart's desire, and prayer to God, for you is, that ye may be saved" from this overflowing of ungodliness, and that here may its proud waves be stayed! But is it so indeed? God knoweth, yea, and our own consciences, it is not. Ye have not kept yourselves pure. Corrupt are we also and abominable; and few are there that understand any more; few that worship God in spirit and in truth. We too are "a generation that set not our hearts aright, and whose spirit cleaveth not steadfastly unto God:" he hath appointed us indeed to be "the salt of the earth; but if the salt have lost its savour, it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men."

13. And, "shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord? Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" Yea, we know not how soon he may say to the sword, "Sword, go through the land!" He hath given us long space to repent. He lets us alone this year also: but he warns and awakens us by thunder. His judgments are abroad in the earth. And we have all reason to expect the heaviest of all, even that he "should come unto us quickly, and remove our candlestick out of its place, except we repent and do the first works;" unless we return to the principles of the Reformation, the truth and simplicity of the gospel. Perhaps we are now resisting the last effort of divine grace to save us. Perhaps we have well nigh "filled up the measure of our iniquities," by rejecting the counsel of God against ourselves, and casting out his messengers.

14. O God! "in the midst of wrath remember mercy!" Be glorified in our reformation, not in our destruction. Let us hear the rod, and him that appointed it. Now, that thy "judgments are abroad in the earth, let the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness."

15. My brethren, it is high time for us to awake out of sleep: before the "great trumpet of the Lord be blown," and our land become a field of blood. O may we speedily see the things that make for our peace, before they are hid from our eyes! "Turn thou us, O good Lord, and let thine anger cease from us. O Lord, look down from heaven, behold and visit this vine; and cause us to know the time of our visitation." "Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name! O deliver us, and be merciful to our sins, for thy name's sake! And so we will not go back from thee: O let us live, and we shall call upon thy name. Turn us again, O Lord of Hosts! shew the light of thy countenance, and we shall be whole."

"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the Church, by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end.—Amen!"

SERMON IV.

SCRIPTURAL CHRISTIANITY:

PREACHED AT

ST. MARY'S, OXFORD, BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY, ON

AUGUST 24, 1744.

"Whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning, if the sword come and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head," Ezek. xxxiii. 4.

Acts iv. 31.

"*And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.*"

1. THE same expression occurs in the second chapter, where we read, "When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all, (the Apostles with the women, and the mother of Jesus, and his brethren,) with one accord, in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost."* One immediate effect whereof was, "They began to speak with other tongues;"† insomuch, that both the Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and the other strangers who "came together, when this was noised abroad, heard them speak, in their several tongues, the wonderful works of God."‡

2. In this chapter we read, that when the Apostles and

* Acts ii. 1—4. † Ver. 5. ‡ Ver. 6.

brethren had been praying, and praising God, "the place was shaken where they were assembled together, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost."* Not that we find any visible appearance here, such as had been in the former instance: nor are we informed that the *extraordinary gifts* of the Holy Ghost were then given to all or any of them; such as "the gift of healing, of working other miracles, of prophecy, of discerning spirits: the speaking with divers kinds of tongues, and the interpretation of tongues."†

3. Whether these gifts of the Holy Ghost were designed to remain in the Church throughout all ages; and whether or not they will be restored at the nearer approach of the "restitution of all things," are questions which are not needful to decide. But it is needful to observe this, that even in the infancy of the Church, God divided them with a sparing hand. Were all even then Prophets? Were all workers of miracles? Had all the gifts of healing? Did all speak with tongues? No, in no wise. Perhaps not one in a thousand. Probably none but the teachers in the Church, and only some of them.‡ It was, therefore, for a more excellent purpose than this, that "they were all filled with the Holy Ghost."

4. It was, to give them (what none can deny to be essential to all Christians in all ages) the mind which was in Christ, those holy fruits of the Spirit, which, whosoever hath not, is none of his: to fill them with "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness:"§ to endue them with faith, (perhaps it might be rendered, *fidelity*), with meekness and temperance: to enable them to crucify the flesh, with its affections and lusts, its passions and desires; and, in consequence of that inward change, to fulfil all outward righteousness, "to walk as Christ also walked," "in the work of faith, the patience of hope, the labour of love."‖

5. Without busying ourselves then in curious, needless

* Acts iv. 31. † 1 Cor. xii. 9, 10. ‡ Ver. 29—30. § Gal. v. 22—24.
‖ 1 Thess. i. 3.

inquiries, touching those *extraordinary* gifts of the Spirit, let us take a nearer view of these his *ordinary* fruits; which we are assured will remain throughout all ages: of that great Work of God among the children of men, which we are used to express by one word, Christianity: not as it implies a set of opinions, a system of doctrines, but as it refers to men's hearts and lives. And this Christianity it may be useful to consider under three distinct views:

I. As beginning to exist in individuals;
II. As spreading from one to another;
III. As covering the earth.

I design to close these considerations with a plain practical application.

I. And first, let us consider Christianity in its rise, and beginning to exist in individuals.

Suppose, then, one of those who heard the Apostle Peter preaching repentance and remission of sins, was pricked to the heart, was convinced of sin, repented, and then believed in Jesus. By this faith of the operation of God, which was the very substance, or subsistence of things hoped for,* the demonstrative evidence of invisible things, he instantly received the Spirit of adoption, whereby he now cried, "Abba, Father!"† Now, first, it was that he could call Jesus Lord, by the Holy Ghost,‡ the Spirit itself bearing witness with his spirit that he was a child of God.§ Now it was that he could truly say, "I live not, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."‖

2. This then was the very essence of his faith, a divine ἔλεγχος¶ of the love of God the Father, through the Son of his love, to him a sinner, now accepted in the Beloved. And, "being justified by faith, he had peace with God,"** yea, "the peace of God ruling in his heart:" a peace which passing all understanding, (παντὸς νοῦ, all barely rational con-

* Heb. xi. 1. † Rom. viii. 15. ‡ 1 Cor. xii. 3. § Rom. viii. 15.
‖ Gal. ii. 20. ¶ Evidence or conviction. ** Rom. v. 1.

ception) kept his heart and mind from all doubt and fear, through the knowledge of him in whom he had believed. He could not therefore "be afraid of any evil tidings; for his heart stood fast, believing in the Lord." He feared not what man could do unto him, knowing the very hairs of his head were all numbered. He feared not all the powers of darkness, whom God was daily bruising under his feet. Least of all was he afraid to die, nay, he desired to depart, and to be with Christ;* who, "through death, had destroyed him that had the power of death, even the devil, and delivered them who, through fear of death, were all their life-time (till then) subject to bondage."†

3. His soul therefore magnified the Lord, and his spirit rejoiced in God his Saviour. "He rejoiced in him with joy unspeakable," who had reconciled him to God, even the Father: "in whom he had redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins." He rejoiced in that witness of God's Spirit with his spirit, that he was a child of God: and more abundantly, "in hope of the glory of God," in hope of the glorious image of God, and full renewal of his soul in righteousness and true holiness; and in hope of that crown of glory, that "inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

4. "The love of God was also shed abroad in his heart, by the Holy Ghost, which was given unto him."‡ "Because he was a son, God had sent forth the Spirit of his Son into his heart, crying, Abba, Father!"§ And that filial love of God was continually increased by the witness he had in himself,‖ of God's pardoning love to him, by "beholding what manner of love it was, which the Father had bestowed upon him, that he should be called a child of God."¶ So that God was the desire of his eyes, and the joy of his heart: his portion in time and in eternity.

5. He that thus loved God, could not but love his brother also; and, "not in word only, but in deed and in

* Phil. i. 23. † Heb. ii. 15. ‡ Rom. v. 5. § Gal. iv. 6. ‖ 1 John v. 10.
¶ 1 John iii. 1.

truth." "If God," said he, "so loved us, we ought also to love one another;"* yea, every soul of man, as "the mercy of God is over all his works."† Agreeably hereto, the affection of this lover of God, embraced all mankind for his sake; not excepting those whom he had never seen in the flesh, or those of whom he knew nothing more than that they were "the offspring of God;" for whose souls his Son had died; not excepting the *evil* and *unthankful*, and least of all his enemies, those who hated, or persecuted, or despitefully used him for his Master's sake. These had a peculiar place, both in his heart and in his prayers. He loved them "even as Christ loved us."

6. "And love is not puffed up."‡ It abases to the dust every soul wherein it dwells: accordingly, he was lowly of heart, little, mean, and vile in his own eyes. He neither sought nor received the praise of men, but that which cometh of God only. He was meek and long-suffering, gentle to all, and easy to be intreated. Faithfulness and truth never forsook him; they were "bound about his neck, and wrote on the table of his heart." By the same Spirit he was enabled to be temperate in all things, refraining his soul even as a weaned child. He was "crucified to the world, and the world crucified to him:" superior to "the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, and the pride of life." By the same Almighty Love was he saved, both from passion and pride, from lust and vanity, from ambition and covetousness, and from every temper which was not in Christ.

7. It may easily be believed, he who had this love in his heart, would work no evil to his neighbour. It was impossible for him, knowingly and designedly, to do harm to any man. He was at the greatest distance from cruelty and wrong, from any unjust or unkind action. With the same care did he "set a watch before his mouth, and keep the door of his lips;" lest he should offend in tongue, either

* 1 John iv. 11. † Psal. cxlv. 9. ‡ 1 Cor. xiii. 4.

against justice, or against mercy or truth. He put away all lying, falsehood, and fraud; neither was guile found in his mouth. He spake evil of no man; nor did an unkind word ever come out of his lips.

8. And, as he was deeply sensible of the truth of that word, "Without me ye can do nothing," and, consequently, of the need he had to be watered of God every moment; so he continued daily in all the ordinances of God, the stated channels of his grace to man. In the Apostles doctrine or teaching, receiving that food of the soul with all readiness of heart, in the breaking of bread, which he found to be the communion of the body of Christ, and *in the prayers* and praises offered up by the great congregation. And thus, he daily "grew in grace," increasing in strength, in the knowledge and love of God.

9. But it did not satisfy him, barely to abstain from doing evil. His soul was athirst to do good. The language of his heart continually was, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." My Lord went about doing good; and shall not I tread in his steps? As he had opportunity, therefore, if he could do no good of a higher kind, he fed the hungry, clothed the naked, helped the fatherless or stranger, visited and assisted them that were sick or in prison. He gave all his goods to the poor. He rejoiced to labour or to suffer for them; and wherein soever he might profit another, there especially to "deny himself." He counted nothing too dear to part with for them, as well remembering the word of his Lord, "Insomuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."*

10. Such was Christianity in its rise. Such was a Christian in ancient days. Such was every one of those, who, when they heard the threatenings of the Chief Priests and Elders, "lift up their voice to God, with one accord, and were all filled with the Holy Ghost. The multitude of them that believed, were of one heart and of one soul." (So did the love of him in whom they had believed, constrain them

* Matthew xxv. 40.

to love one another!) "Neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things in common." So fully were they crucified to the world, and the world crucified to them! "And they continued steadfastly with one accord in the Apostles' doctrine, and in the breaking of bread, and in prayer. And great grace was upon them all; neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses, sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the Apostles' feet; and distribution was made unto every man, according as he had need."*

II. 1. Let us take a view, in the second place, of this Christianity, as spreading from one to another, and so gradually making its way into the world. For such was the will of God concerning it, who "did not light a candle to put it under a bushel, but that it might give light to all that were in the house." And this our Lord had declared to his first disciples, "Ye are the salt of the earth, and the light of the world;" at the same time that he gave that general command, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." †

2. And, indeed, supposing a few of these lovers of mankind, to see "the whole world lying in wickedness," can we believe they would be unconcerned at the sight, at the misery of those for whom their Lord had died? Would not their bowels yearn over them, and their hearts melt away for very trouble? Could they then stand idle all the day long, even were there no command from him whom they loved? Rather would they not labour, by all possible means, to pluck some of these brands out of the burning? Undoubtedly they would: they would spare no pains to bring back whomsoever they could of those poor "sheep that had gone astray, to the great Shepherd and Bishop of their souls."‡

3. So the Christians of old did. They laboured, having

* Acts iv. 31—35. † Matt. v. 13—16. ‡ 1 Pet. ii. 25.

opportunity, "to do good to all men,"* warning them to flee from the wrath to come; now, now, to escape the damnation of hell. They declared, "The times of ignorance God winked at; but now he calleth all men every where to repent."† They cried aloud, "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; so iniquity shall not be your ruin."‡ They § reasoned with them of temperance and righteousness, or justice, of the virtues opposite to their reigning sins, and of judgment to come, of the wrath of God which would surely be executed on evil doers in that day when he should judge the world.

4. They endeavoured herein to speak to every man severally as he had need. To the careless, to those who lay unconcerned in darkness and in the shadow of death, they thundered, "Awake, thou that sleepest: arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light:" but to those who were already awakened out of sleep, and groaning under a sense of the wrath of God, their language was, "We have an Advocate with the Father; he is the Propitiation for our sins." Meantime, those who had believed, they "provoked to love and to good works; to patient continuance in well-doing; and to abound more and more in that holiness, without which no man can see the Lord."‖

5. And their labour was not in vain in the Lord. "His word ran and was glorified. It grew mightily and prevailed." But so much the more did offences prevail also. The world in general were offended, "because they testified of it, that the works thereof were evil."¶ The men of pleasure were offended, not only because these men were made, as it were, to reprove their thoughts: ("He professeth, said they, to have the knowledge of God: he calleth himself the child of the Lord: his life is not like other men's: his ways are of another fashion: he abstaineth from our ways, as from filthiness: he maketh his boast, that God is his Father:"**) But much more, because so many of their coun-

* Gal. vi. 10. † Acts xvii. 30. ‡ Ezek. xviii. 30. § Acts xxiv. 25.
‖ Eph. xii. 14. ¶ John vii. 7. ** Wis. ii. 13—16.

panions were taken away, and would no more run with them to the same excess of riot,* The men of reputation were offended, because, as the gospel spread, they declined in the esteem of the people; and because many no longer dared to give them flattering titles, or to pay man the homage due to God only. The men of trade called one another together, and said, "Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth. But ye see and hear that these men have persuaded and turned away much people. So that this craft is in danger to be set at nought."† Above all, the men of religion, so called, the men of *outside* religion, "the saints of the world," were offended, and ready at every opportunity to cry out, "Men of Israel, help! we have found these men! Pestilent fellows, movers of sedition throughout the world."‡ "These are the men that teach all men, every where, against the people, and against the law."§

6. Thus it was that the heavens grew black with clouds, and the storm gathered amain. For the more Christianity spread, the more hurt was done, in the account of those who received it not; and the number increased of those who were more and more enraged at these "men who thus turned the world upside down;"‖ insomuch that they more and more cried out, "Away with such fellows from the earth; it is not fit that they should live," yea, and sincerely believed, that whosoever should kill them would do God service.

7. Mean-while they did not fail to cast out their name as evil:¶ so that this "sect was every where spoken against."** Men said all manner of evil of them, even as had been done of the prophets that were before them.†† And whatsoever any would affirm, others would believe. So that offences grew as the stars of heaven for multitude. And hence arose, at the time fore-ordained of the Father, persecution in all its forms. Some, for a season, suffered only shame and reproach; some, "the spoiling of their goods; some had trials of

* 1 Pet. iv. 4. † Acts xix. 25, &c. ‡ Acts xxiv. 5. § Acts xxi. 28.
‖ Acts xvii. 6. ¶ Luke vi. 22. ** Acts xxviii. 22.
†† Mat. v. 11.

mocking and scourging, some of bonds and imprisonment: and others resisted unto blood."*

8. Now it was that the pillars of hell were shaken, and the kingdom of God spread more and more. Sinners were every where "turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." He gave his children, "such a mouth, and such wisdom, as all their adversaries could not resist." And their lives were of equal force with their words. But above all, their sufferings spake to all the world. They "approved themselves the servants of God, in afflictions, in necessities; in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours; in perils in the sea, in perils in the wilderness; in weariness and in painfulness, in hunger and in thirst, in cold and nakedness."† And when, having fought the good fight, they were led as sheep to the slaughter, and offered upon the sacrifice and service of their faith, then the blood of each found a voice, and the heathen owned, "He being dead, yet speaketh."

9. Thus did Christianity spread itself in the earth. But how soon did the tares appear with the wheat! and the *mystery of iniquity* work as well as the *mystery of godliness!* How soon did Satan find a seat, even *in the temple of God!* "Till the woman fled into the wilderness, and the faithful were again minished from the children of men." Here we tread a beaten path: the still increasing corruptions of the succeeding generations, have been largely described from time to time, by those witnesses God raised up, to shew that he had "built his Church upon a Rock, and the gates of hell should not (wholly) prevail against her."‡

(III.) 1. But shall we not see greater things than these? Yea, greater than have been yet from the beginning of the world. Can Satan cause the truth of God to fail, or his promises to be of none effect? If not, the time will come, when Christianity will prevail over all, and cover the earth. Let us stand a little, and survey (the third thing which was proposed) this strange sight, a *Christian world.* "Of this

* Heb. x. 34.—xi. 37, &c. † 2 Cor. vi. 4, &c. ‡ Matt. xvi. 18.

the Prophets of old inquired and searched diligently :"* of this the Spirit which was in them testified, " It shall come to pass in the last days, that the Mountain of the Lord's House shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow into it. And they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation; neither shall they learn war any more."† " In that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, which shall stand for an Ensign of the people. To it shall the Gentiles seek, and his rest shall be glorious. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again to recover the remnant of his people; and he shall set up an Ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah, from the four corners of the earth."‡ " The wolf shall then dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid: and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. They shall not hurt nor destroy, saith the Lord, in all my holy mountain. For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."§

2. To the same effect are the words of the great Apostle, which it is evident have never yet been fulfilled. " Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. But through their fall salvation is come to the Gentiles. And if the diminishing of them be the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fulness? For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, That blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in: and so all Israel shall be saved."‖

3. Suppose now the fulness of time to be come, and the prophecies to be accomplished, What a prospect is this! All is "peace, quietness, and assurance for ever." Here is no din of arms, no " confused noise," no " garments rolled in

* 1 Pet. i. 10, 11, &c. † Isa. ii. 1, 4. ‡ Isa. xi. 10—12.
§ Isa. xi. 6, 9. ‖ Rom. xi. 1, 11, 12, 25, 26.

blood. Destructions are come to a perpetual end:" wars are ceased from the earth. Neither are there any intestine jars remaining; no brother rising up against brother; no country or city divided against itself, and tearing out its own bowels. Civil discord is at an end for evermore, and none is left either to destroy or hurt his neighbour. Here is no oppression to *make* even *the wise man mad;* no extortion to *grind the face of the poor;* no robbery or wrong; no rapine or injustice; for all are "content with such things as they possess." Thus "righteousness and peace have kissed each other;"* they have "taken root and filled the land:" righteousness flourishing out of the earth, and "peace looking down from heaven."

4. And with righteousness or justice, mercy is also found. The earth is no longer full of cruel habitations. The Lord hath destroyed both the blood-thirsty and malicious, the envious and revengeful man. Were there any provocation, there is none that now knoweth to return evil for evil; but indeed there is none doth evil, no not one; for all are harmless as doves. And being filled with peace and joy in believing, and united in one body, by one spirit, they all love as brethren, they are all of one heart, and of one soul. "Neither saith any of them, that ought of the things which he possesseth is his own." There is none among them that lacketh: for every man loveth his neighbour as himself. And all walk by one rule, "Whatever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do unto them."

5. It follows, that no unkind word can ever be heard among them. No strife of tongues, no contention of any kind, no railing or evil speaking; but every one "opens his mouth with wisdom, and in his tongue there is the law of kindness." Equally incapable are they of fraud or guile: their love is without dissimulation: their words are always the just expression of their thoughts, opening a window into their breasts, that whosoever desires, may look into their hearts, and see that only love and God are there.

* Psal. lxxv. 10

6. Thus, where "the Lord Omnipotent taketh to himself his mighty power and reigneth, doth he subdue all things to himself;" cause every heart to overflow with love, and fill every mouth with praise. "Happy are the people that are in such a case; yea, blessed are the people who have the Lord for their God."* "Arise, shine, (saith the Lord) for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. Thou hast known that I, the Lord, am thy Saviour, and thy Redeemer, the mighty God of Jacob. I have made thy Officers peace, and thy Exacters righteousness. Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls, Salvation, and thy gates, Praise. Thy people are all righteous; they shall inherit the land for ever; the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified. The sun shall no more be thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory."†

IV. Having thus briefly considered *Christianity*, as beginning, as going on, and as covering the earth, it remains only that I should close the whole with a plain, practical Application.

1. And first, I would ask, Where does this *Christianity* now exist? Where, I pray, do the *Christians* live? Which is the country, the inhabitants whereof are all thus filled with the Holy Ghost? Are all of one heart and of one soul? Cannot suffer one among them to lack any thing, but continually give to every man as he hath need? Who, one and all, have the love of God filling their hearts, and constraining them to love their neighbour as themselves? Who have all "put on bowels of mercy, humbleness of mind, gentleness, long-suffering?" Who offend not in any kind, either by word or deed, against justice, mercy, or truth? But in every point do unto all men, as they would these should do unto them. With what propriety can we term any a Christian

* Psal. cxliv. 15. † Isa. lx. 1, 16—19.

Country, which does not answer this description? Why then, let us confess we have never yet seen a Christian Country upon earth.

2. I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, if ye do account me a madman or a fool, yet, *as a fool bear with me.* It is utterly needful that some one should use great plainness of speech towards you. It is more especially needful at *this* time; for who knoweth but it is the *last?* Who knoweth how soon the righteous Judge may say, "I will no more be entreated for this people. Though Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in this land, they should but deliver their own souls." And who will use this plainness, if I do not? Therefore I, even I, will speak. And I adjure you, by the living God, that ye steel not your breasts against receiving a blessing at *my* hands. Do not say in your hearts, *Non persuadebis, etiamsi persuaseris:* or in other words, Lord, thou shalt not *send by whom thou wilt send.* Let me rather perish in my blood, than be saved by this man!

3. Brethren, "I am persuaded better things of you, though I thus speak." Let me ask you then, in tender love, and in the spirit of meekness, Is this city a Christian city? Is Christianity, Scriptural Christianity, found here? Are we, considered as a community of men, so "filled with the Holy Ghost," as to enjoy in our hearts, and shew forth in our lives, the genuine fruits of that Spirit? Are all the Magistrates, all Heads and Governors of Colleges and Halls, and their respective Societies (not to speak of the inhabitants of the town) "of one heart and one soul? Is the love of God shed abroad in our hearts?" Are our tempers the same that were in him? And are our lives agreeable thereto? Are we "holy as he who hath called us is holy, in all manner of conversation?"

4. I intreat you to observe, that here are no peculiar notions now under consideration: that the question moved is not concerning *doubtful opinions*, of one kind or another; but concerning the undoubted, fundamental branches, (if there be any such) of our common Christianity. And for the decision thereof, I appeal to your own consciences, guided by

the word of God. He therefore that is not condemned by his own heart, let him go free.

5. In the fear then, and in the presence of the great God, before whom both you and I shall shortly appear, I pray you, that are in authority over us, whom I reverence for your office sake, to consider, (and not after the manner of dissemblers with God) are you "filled with the Holy Ghost?" Are you lively portraitures of him, whom ye are appointed to represent among men? "I have said, ye are gods," ye magistrates and rulers; ye are by office so nearly allied to the God of heaven! In your several stations and degrees, ye are to shew forth unto us "the Lord our Governor." Are all the thoughts of your heart, all your tempers and desires, suitable to your high calling? Are all your words like unto those which come out of the mouth of God? Is there, in all your actions, dignity and love? A greatness which words cannot express, which can flow only from a heart full of God; and yet consistent with the character of "man that is a worm, and the son of man that is a worm!"

6. Ye venerable men, who are more especially called to form the tender minds of youth, to dispel thence the shades of ignorance and error, and train them up to be wise unto salvation, are you "filled with the Holy Ghost?" With all these "fruits of the Spirit," which your important office so indispensably requires? Is your heart whole with God? Full of love and zeal to set up his kingdom on earth? Do you continually remind those under your care, that the one rational end of all our studies, is to know, love, and serve "the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent?" Do you inculcate upon them, day by day, that love alone never faileth? (Whereas, whether there be tongues, they shall fail, or philosophical knowledge, it shall vanish away:) and that, without love, all learning is but splendid ignorance, pompous folly, vexation of spirit. Has all you teach an actual tendency to the love of God, and of all mankind for his sake? Have you an eye to this end in whatever you prescribe, touching the kind, the manner, and

the measure of their studies; desiring and labouring that wherever the lot of these young soldiers of Christ is cast, they may be so many "burning and shining lights, adorning the gospel of Christ in all things?" And permit me to ask, Do you put forth all your strength in the vast work you have undertaken? Do you labour herein with all your might? Exerting every faculty of your soul? Using every talent which God hath lent you, and that to the uttermost of your power?

7. Let it not be said, that I speak here, as if all under your care were intended to be Clergymen. Not so: I only speak as if they were all intended to be Christians. But what example is set them by us who enjoy the beneficence of our forefathers? by Fellows, Students, Scholars; more especially those who are of some rank and eminence? Do ye, brethren, abound in the fruits of the Spirit, in lowliness of mind, in self-denial and mortification, in seriousness and composure of spirit, in patience, meekness, sobriety, temperance; and in unwearied, restless endeavours, to do good, in every kind, unto all men; to relieve their outward wants, and to bring their souls to the true knowledge and love of God? Is this the general character of Fellows of Colleges? I fear it is not. Rather, have not pride and haughtiness of spirit, impatience and peevishness, sloth and indolence, gluttony and sensuality, and even a proverbial uselessness, been objected to us, perhaps not always by our enemies, nor wholly without ground? O that God would roll away this reproach from us, that the very memory of it might perish for ever!

8. Many of us are more immediately consecrated to God, called to minister in holy things. Are we then patterns to the rest, "in word, in conversation, in charity; in spirit, in faith, in purity?"* Is there written on our forehead and on our heart, "Holiness to the Lord?" From what motives did we enter upon this office? Was it indeed with a single eye "to serve God, trusting that we were inwardly moved

* 2 Cor. iv. 2.

by the Holy Ghost, to take upon us this ministration, for the promoting of his glory, and the edifying of his people?" And have we "clearly determined, by God's grace, to give ourselves wholly to this office?" Do we forsake and set aside, as much as in us lies, all worldly cares and studies? Do we apply ourselves wholly to this one thing, and draw all our cares and studies this way? Are we apt to teach? Are we taught of God, that we may be able to teach others also? Do we know God? Do we know Jesus Christ? Hath "God revealed his Son in us?" And hath he "made us able Ministers of the New Covenant?" Where then are the "seals of our Apostleship?" Who that were dead in trespasses and sins, have been quickened by our word? Have we a burning zeal to save souls from death, so that for their sake we often forget even to eat our bread? Do we speak plainly, "by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God?"* Are we dead to the world and the things of the world, "laying up all our treasure in heaven?" Do we lord over God's heritage? Or, are we the least, the servants of all? When we bear the reproach of Christ, does it sit heavily upon us? Or, do we rejoice therein? When we are smitten on the one cheek, do we resent it? Are we impatient of affronts? Or, do we turn the other also; not resisting the evil, but overcoming evil with good? Have we a bitter zeal, inciting us to strive sharply and passionately with them that are out of the way? Or, is our zeal the flame of love, so as to direct all our words with sweetness, lowliness, and meekness of wisdom?

9. Once more, What shall we say concerning the youth of this place? Have you either the form or the power of Christian godliness? Are you humble, teachable, advisable; or stubborn, self-willed, heady, and high-minded? Are you obedient to your superiors as to parents? Or, do you despise those to whom you owe the tenderest reverence? Are you diligent in your easy business, pursuing your studies with all your strength? Do you redeem the time, crowding as

* 2 Cor. iv. 2.

much work into every day as it can contain? Rather, are ye not conscious to yourselves, that you waste away, day after day, either in reading what has no tendency to Christianity, or in gaming, or in—you know not what? Are you better managers of your fortune than of your time? Do you, out of principle, take care to owe no man any thing? Do you "remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy;" to spend it in the more immediate worship of God? When you are in his house, do you consider that God is there? Do you behave, "as seeing him that is invisible?" Do you know how to "possess your bodies, in sanctification and honour?" Are not drunkenness and uncleanness found among you? Yea, are there not a multitude of you who "glory in their shame?" Do not many of you "take the name of God in vain," perhaps habitually, without either remorse or fear? Yea, are there not a multitude of you that are forsworn? I fear, a swiftly-increasing multitude. Be not surprised, brethren. Before God and this congregation, I own myself to have been of the number: solemnly swearing to observe all those customs, which I then knew nothing of; and those statutes, which I did not so much as read over, either then, or for some years after. What is perjury, if this is not? But if it be, O what a weight of sin, yea, sin of no common dye, lies upon us! And shall not the Most High regard it?

V. May it not be one of the consequences of this, that so many of you are a generation of strangers: strangers with God, with one another, and with your own souls? For, how few of you spend, from one week to another, a single hour in private prayer! How few have any thought of God in the general tenor of your conversation! Who of you is, in any degree, acquainted with the work of his Spirit, his supernatural work in the souls of men? Can you hear, unless now and then, in a church, any talk of the Holy Spirit? Would you not take it for granted, if one began such a conversation, that it was either Hypocrisy or Enthusiasm? In the name of the Lord God Almighty, I ask, What religion are you of? Even the talk of Christianity, or rather, will not

bear. O, my brethren! What a Christian city is this! "It is time for thee, Lord, to lay to thine hand!"

11. For, indeed, what probability, what possibility rather, (speaking after the manner of men) is there that Christianity, Scriptural Christianity, should be again the religion of this place? That all orders of men among us should speak and live as men "filled with the Holy Spirit?" By whom should this Christianity be restored? By those of you that are in authority? Are you convinced then that this is Scriptural Christianity? Are you desirous it should be restored? And do ye not count your fortune, liberty, life, dear unto yourselves, so ye may be instrumental in the restoring of it? But, suppose ye have this desire, who hath any power proportioned to the effect? Perhaps some of you have made a few faint attempts, but with how small success! Shall Christianity then be restored by young, unknown, inconsiderable men? I know not whether ye yourselves could suffer it. Would not some of you cry out, "Young man, in so doing thou reproachest us?" But there is no danger of your being put to the proof; so hath iniquity overspread us like a flood. Whom then shall God send? The famine, the pestilence, (the last messengers of God to a guilty land) or the sword? The armies of the Romish Aliens to reform us into our first love? Nay, "rather let us fall into thy hand, O Lord, and let us not fall into the hand of man."

Lord, save, or we perish! Take us out of the mire that we sink not! O help us against these enemies! for vain is the help of man. Unto thee all things are possible. According to the greatness of thy power, preserve thou those that are appointed to die; and preserve us in the manner that seemest to thee good; not as we will, but as thou wilt.

SERMON V.

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH.

ROMANS iv. 5.

"To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the Ungodly, his Faith is counted to him for Righteousness."

1. HOW a sinner may be justified before God, the Lord and Judge of all, is a question of no common importance, to every child of man. It contains the foundation of all our hope; inasmuch as while we are at enmity with God, there can be no true peace, no solid joy, either in time or in eternity. What peace can there be, while our own heart condemns us? And much more, he that is "greater than our heart and knoweth all things?" What solid joy, either in this world or that to come, while "the wrath of God abideth on us?"

2. And yet how little hath this important question been understood! What confused notions have many had concerning it! Indeed, not only confused, but often utterly false; contrary to the truth, as light to darkness: notions absolutely inconsistent with the Oracles of God, and with the whole analogy of Faith. And hence, erring concerning the very foundation, they could not possibly build thereon; at least, not "gold, silver, or precious stones," which would endure when tried by fire; but only "hay and stubble," neither acceptable to God, nor profitable to man.

3. In order to do justice, as far as in me lies, to the vast importance of the subject, to save those that seek the truth in sincerity, from "vain jangling and strife of words," to clear the confusedness of thought, into which so many have already been led thereby; and to give them true and just conceptions of this great mystery of godliness, I shall endeavour to shew,

First, What is the general ground of this whole doctrine of Justification;
Secondly, What Justification is;
Thirdly, Who they are that are justified: and,
Fourthly, On what Terms they are justified.

I. I am first to shew, What is the general ground of this whole doctrine of Justification.

1. In the image of God was man made, holy as he that created him is holy; merciful as the Author of all is merciful; perfect as his Father in heaven is perfect. As God is love, so man dwelling in love, dwelt in God, and God in him. God made him to be an "image of his own eternity," an incorruptible picture of the God of glory. He was accordingly pure, as God is pure, from every spot of sin. He knew not evil in any kind or degree, but was inwardly and outwardly sinless and undefiled. He "loved the Lord his God with all his heart, and with all his mind, and soul, and strength."

2. To man thus upright and perfect, God gave a perfect law, to which he required full and perfect obedience. He required full obedience in every point, and this to be performed without any intermission, from the moment man became a living soul, till the time of his trial should be ended. No allowance was made for any falling short. As, indeed, there was no need of any; man being altogether equal to the task assigned, and thoroughly furnished for every good word and work.

3. To the entire law of love which was written in his heart, (against which, perhaps, he could not sin directly) it seemed good to the sovereign wisdom of God, to superadd

one positive law: "Thou shalt not eat of the fruit of the tree that groweth in the midst of the garden," annexing that penalty thereto, "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die."

4. Such then was the state of man in Paradise. By the free, unmerited love of God, he was holy and happy: he knew, loved, enjoyed God, which is, in substance, life everlasting. And, in this life of love, he was to continue for ever, if he continued to obey God in all things; but, if he disobeyed in any, he was to forfeit all. "In that day, said God, thou shalt surely die."

5. Man did disobey God. He "ate of the tree, of which God commanded him, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it." And, in that day he was condemned, by the righteous judgment of God. Then also the sentence whereof he was warned before, began to take place upon him. For the moment he tasted that fruit, he died: his soul died, was separated from God; separate from whom the soul has no more life than the body has when separate from the soul. His body, likewise, became corruptible and mortal; so that death then took hold on this also. And being already dead in the spirit, dead to God, dead in sin, he hastened on to death everlasting; to the destruction both of body and soul, in the fire never to be quenched.

6. Thus, "by one man, sin entered into the world, and death by sin. And so death passed upon all men," as being contained in him who was the common Father and Representative of us all. Thus, "through the offence of one," all are dead, dead to God, dead in sin, dwelling in a corruptible, mortal body, shortly to be dissolved, and under the sentence of death eternal. For, as "by one man's disobedience, all were made sinners;" so, by that offence of one, "judgment came upon all men to condemnation," Rom. v. 12, &c.

7. In this state we were, even all mankind, when "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, to the end we might not perish but have everlasting life." In the fulness of time, he was made Man, another common

Head of mankind, a second general Parent and Representative of the whole human race. And as such it was that "he bore our griefs, the Lord laying upon him the iniquities of us all." Then was he "wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities. He made his soul an offering for sin:" he poured out his blood for the transgressors: he "bore our sins in his own body on the tree," that, "by his stripes we might be healed:" and by that one oblation of himself, once offered, he hath redeemed me and all mankind; having thereby "made a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world."

8. In consideration of this, that the Son of God hath "tasted death for every man," God hath now "reconciled the world to himself, not imputing to them their former trespasses." And thus, "as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so, by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification." So that, for the sake of his well-beloved Son, of what he hath done and suffered for us, God now vouchsafes on only one condition (which himself also enables us to perform) both to remit the punishment due to our sins, to reinstate us in his favour, and to restore our dead souls to spiritual life, as the earnest of life eternal.

9. This therefore is the general ground, of the whole doctrine of Justification. By the sin of the first Adam, who was not only the Father, but likewise the Representative of us all, we all fell short of the favour of God: we all became children of wrath: or, as the Apostle expresses it, "Judgment came upon all men to condemnation." Even so, by the sacrifice for sin made by the Second Adam, as the Representative of us all, God is so far reconciled to all the world, that he hath given them a new Covenant. The plain condition whereof being once fulfilled, "there is no more condemnation for us, but we are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ."

II. 1. But what is it to be *justified?* What is *Justification?* This was the second thing which I proposed to shew. And it is evident, from what has been already observed, that

it is not the being made actually just and righteous. This is *Sanctification*; which is indeed, in some degree, the immediate fruit of justification; but, nevertheless, is a distinct gift of God, and of a totally different nature. The one implies, what God "does for us" through his Son: the other, what he "works in us" by his Spirit. So that, although some rare instances may be found, wherein the term *justified* or *Justification* is used in so wide a sense as to include *Sanctification* also; yet, in general use, they are sufficiently distinguished from each other, both by St. Paul and the other Inspired Writers.

2. Neither is that far-fetched conceit, that justification is, the clearing us from accusation, particularly that of Satan, easily proveable from any clear text of Holy Writ. In the whole scriptural account of this matter, as above laid down, neither that accuser nor his accusation appears to be at all taken in. It cannot, indeed, be denied, that he is the "Accuser of men," emphatically so called. But it does, in nowise, appear, that the great Apostle hath any reference to this, more or less, in all that he hath written touching Justification, either to the Romans or the Galatians.

3. It is also far easier to take for granted, than to prove from any clear Scripture-testimony, that Justification is, the clearing us from the accusation brought against us by the Law. At least, if this forced, unnatural way of speaking, mean either more or less than this, that, whereas we have transgressed the Law of God, and thereby deserved the damnation of hell; God does not inflict on those who are justified, the punishment which they had deserved.

4. Least of all does Justification imply, that God is deceived in those whom he justifies; that he thinks them to be what, in fact, they are not; that he accounts them to be otherwise than they are. It does, by no means, imply that God judges concerning us, contrary to the real nature of things; that he esteems us better than we really are, or believes us righteous when we are unrighteous. Surely not. The judgment of the all-wise God is always according to truth. Neither can it ever consist with his unerring wisdom,

to think that I am innocent, to judge that I am righteous or holy, because another is so. He can no more, in this manner, confound me with Christ, than with David or Abraham. Let any man, to whom God hath given understanding, weigh this without prejudice; and he cannot but perceive, that such a notion of Justification is neither reconcileable to reason nor Scripture.

5. The plain scriptural notion of Justification is pardon, the forgiveness of sins. It is that act of God the Father, whereby, for the sake of the propitiation made by the Blood of his Son, he "sheweth forth his righteousness (or mercy) by the remission of the sins that are past." This is the easy, natural account of it given by St. Paul, throughout this whole epistle. So he explains it himself, more particularly in this, and in the following chapter. Thus, in the next verses but one to the text, "Blessed are they," saith he, "whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered: blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." To him that is justified or forgiven, God "will not impute sin" to his condemnation. He will not condemn him on that account, either in this world, or in that which is to come. His sins, all his past sins, in thought, word, and deed, are covered, are blotted out: shall not be remembered or mentioned against him, any more than if they had not been. God will not inflict on that sinner what he deserved to suffer, because the Son of his Love hath suffered for him. And from the time we are "accepted through the Beloved, reconciled to God through his blood," he loves, and blesses, and watches over us for good, even as if we had never sinned.

Indeed the Apostle in one place seems to extend the meaning of the word much farther; where he says, "Not the hearers of the Law, but the doers of the Law, shall be justified." Here he appears to refer our Justification to the sentence of the great day. And so our Lord himself unquestionably doth, when he says, "By thy words thou shalt be justified;" proving thereby, that for "every idle word men shall speak, they shall give an account in the day of judg-

ment." But, perhaps, we can hardly produce another instance of St. Paul's using the word in that distant sense. In the general tenor of his writings, it is evident he doth not. And least of all, in the text before us, which undeniably speaks, not of those who have already "finished their course," but of those who are now just *setting out*, just "beginning to run the race which is set before them."

III. 1. But this is the third thing which was to be considered, namely, who are they that are justified? And the Apostle tells us expressly, the ungodly: "He (that is, God) justifieth the ungodly:" the ungodly of every kind and degree, and none but the ungodly. As "they that are righteous need no repentance," so they need no forgiveness. It is only sinners that have any occasion for pardon: it is sin alone which admits of being forgiven. Forgiveness therefore has an immediate reference to sin, and, in this respect, to nothing else. It is our *unrighteousness* to which the pardoning God is *merciful:* it is our *iniquity* which he "remembereth no more."

2. This seems not to be at all considered by those who so vehemently contend, that a man must be sanctified, that is, holy, before he can be justified: especially by such of them as affirm, that universal holiness or obedience must precede Justification: (unless they mean, that Justification at the last day, which is wholly out of the present question.) So far from it, that the very supposition is not only flatly impossible, (for where there is no love of God, there is no holiness; and there is no love of God but from the sense of his loving us,) but also grossly, intrinsically absurd, contradictory to itself. For it is not a Saint but a Sinner that is forgiven, and under the notion of a sinner. God justifieth not the godly, but the ungodly: not those that are holy already, but the unholy. Upon what condition he doth this, will be considered quickly: but, whatever it be, it cannot be holiness. To assert this, is to say, the Lamb of God takes away only those sins which were taken away before.

3. Does then the good Shepherd seek and save only those that are found already? No. He seeks and saves that which

is lost. He pardons those who need his pardoning mercy. He saves from the guilt of sin, (and, at the same time, from the power,) sinners of every kind, of every degree: men, who, till then, were altogether ungodly; in whom the love of the Father was not; and, consequently, in whom dwelt no good thing, no good or truly Christian temper; but all such as were evil and abominable, pride, anger, love of the world, the genuine fruits of that *carnal mind* which is "enmity against God."

4. These who are sick, the burden of whose sins is intolerable, are they that need a Physician; these who are guilty, who groan under the wrath of God, are they that need a pardon. These who are *condemned already*, not only by God, but also by their own conscience, as by a thousand witnesses, of all their ungodliness, both in thought, and word, and work, cry aloud to him that "justifieth the ungodly, through the redemption that is in Jesus: the ungodly and him that worketh not;" that worketh not before he is justified; any thing that is good, that is truly virtuous or holy, but only evil continually. For his heart is necessarily, essentially evil, till the love of God is shed abroad therein. And while the tree is corrupt, so are the fruits; "for an evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit."

5. If it be objected, "Nay, but a man, before he is justified, may feed the hungry, or clothe the naked; and these are good works:" The answer is easy. He may do these, even before he is justified. And they are, in one sense, "good works;" they are "good and profitable to men." But it does not follow, that they are, strictly speaking, good in themselves, or good in the sight of God. All truly *good works* (to use the words of our Church) *follow after Justification*. And they are, therefore, good and "acceptable to God in Christ," because they "spring out of a true and living faith." By a parity of reason, all *works done before Justification are not good*, in the Christian sense, *forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ*, (though often from some kind of faith in God they may spring,) "yea, rather, because they are not done, as God hath willed

and commanded them to be done, we doubt not (how strange soever it may appear to some,) but they have the nature of sin."

6. Perhaps those who doubt of this, have not duly considered the weighty reason which is here assigned, why no works done before Justification, can be truly and properly good. The argument plainly runs thus:

No works are good, which are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done:

But no works done before Justification are done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done:

Therefore, no works done before Justification are good.

The first proposition is self-evident. And the second, That no works done before Justification, are done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, will appear equally plain and undeniable, if we only consider, God hath willed and commanded, that *all our works* should *be done in charity*, (εν αγαπη), in love, in that love to God which produces love to all mankind. But none of our works can be done in this love, while the love of the Father (of God as our Father) is not in us. And this love cannot be in us till we receive the "Spirit of Adoption, crying in our hearts, Abba, Father." If, therefore, God doth not *justify the ungodly*, and him that (in this sense) *worketh not*, then hath Christ died in vain; then, notwithstanding his death, can no flesh living be justified.

IV. 1. But, on what terms then is he justified, who is altogether *ungodly*, and till that time, *worketh not?* On one alone, which is faith, he "that believeth in him that justifieth the ungodly." And "he that believeth is not condemned;" yea, he is "passed from death unto life." "For the righteousness (or mercy) of God is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe: whom God hath set forth a Propitiation, through faith in his blood; that he might be just, and (consistently with his Justice) the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus; therefore, we conclude, that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the Law: without previous obedience to the Moral Law,

which, indeed, he could not, till now, perform. That it is the Moral Law, and that alone, which is here intended, appears evidently from the words that follow. "Do we then make void the Law through Faith? God forbid! Yea, we establish the Law." What Law do we establish by Faith? Not the Ritual Law: not the Ceremonial Law of Moses. In no wise; but the great unchangeable Law of Love, the holy love of God, and of our neighbour.

2. Faith in general is, a divine, supernatural ἔλεγχος, evidence or conviction "of things not seen," not discoverable by our bodily senses, as being either past, future, or spiritual. Justifying faith implies, not only a divine evidence or conviction, that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself:" but a sure trust and confidence, that Christ died for *my* sins, that he loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*. And at what time soever a sinner thus believes, be it in his early childhood, in the strength of his years, or when he is old and hoary-headed, God justifieth that ungodly one: God, for the sake of his Son, pardoneth and absolveth him, who had in him, till then, no good thing. Repentance indeed, God had given him before; but that repentance was neither more nor less, than a deep sense of the want of all good, and the presence of all evil. And whatever good he hath or doth from that hour, when he first believes in God through Christ, Faith does not *find*, but *bring*. This is the fruit of Faith. First the tree is good, and then the fruit is good also.

3. I cannot describe the nature of this Faith better, than in the words of our own Church. "The only instrument of salvation," (whereof Justification is one branch,) "is Faith: that is, a sure trust and confidence, that God both hath and will forgive our sins, that he hath accepted us again into his favour, for the merits of Christ's death and passion.—But here we must take heed that we do not halt with God, through an inconstant, wavering Faith. Peter coming to Christ upon the water, because he fainted in Faith, was in danger of drowning. So we, if we begin to waver or doubt, it is to be feared, that we shall sink as Peter did, not into

the water, but into the bottomless pit of hell-fire." *Second Sermon on the Passion.*

"Therefore, have a sure and constant Faith, not only that the death of Christ is available for all the world, but that he hath made a full and sufficient sacrifice for *thee*, a perfect cleansing of *thy* sins, so that thou mayest say with the Apostle, he loved *thee*, and gave himself for *thee*. For this is to make Christ *thine own*, and to apply his merits unto *thyself*." *Sermon on the Sacrament, first Part.*

4. By affirming that this Faith is the Term or *Condition of Justification*, I mean, first, that there is no Justification without it. "He that believeth not, is condemned already;" and so long as he believeth not, that condemnation cannot be removed, but "the wrath of God abideth on him." As "there is no other name given under heaven, than that of Jesus of Nazareth," no other merit *whereby* a condemned sinner can ever *be saved* from the guilt of sin; so there is no other way of obtaining a share in his merit, than *by Faith in his name.* So that as long as we are without this Faith, we are "strangers to the Covenant of Promise, we are aliens from the common-wealth of Israel, and without God in the world." Whatsoever virtues (so called) a man may have, I speak of those unto whom the gospel is preached; for "what have I to do to judge them that are without?" Whatsoever good works (so accounted) he may do, it profiteth not; he is still a *child of wrath*, still under the curse, till he believe in Jesus.

5. Faith, therefore, is the *necessary* condition of Justification. Yea, and the *only necessary* condition thereof. This is the second point carefully to be observed; that the very moment God giveth Faith *(for it is the gift of God,)* to the "ungodly, that worketh not," that "Faith is counted to him for righteousness." He hath no righteousness at all, antecedent to this, not so much as negative righteousness, or innocence. But "Faith is imputed to him for righteousness," the very moment that he believeth. Not that God (as was observed before,) thinketh him to be, what he is not. But as "he made Christ to be a sin-offering for us," that is,

treated him as a sinner, punished him for our sins; so he counteth us righteous, from the time we believe in him: that is, he doth not punish us for our sins, yea, treats us as though we were guiltless and righteous.

6. Surely the difficulty of assenting to the proposition, That Faith is the *only condition* of Justification, must arise from not understanding it. We mean thereby thus much, That it is the only thing, without which no one is justified; the only thing that is immediately, indispensably, absolutely requisite in order to pardon. As on the one hand, though a man should have every thing else, without Faith, yet he cannot be justified; so on the other, though he be supposed to want every thing else, yet if he hath Faith, he cannot but be justified. For suppose a sinner of any kind or degree, in a full sense of his total ungodliness, of his utter inability to think, speak, or do good, and his absolute meetness for hell-fire: suppose, I say, this sinner, helpless and hopeless, casts himself wholly on the mercy of God in Christ, (which indeed he cannot do but by the grace of God,) who can doubt, but he is forgiven in that moment? Who will affirm, that any more is *indispensably required*, before that sinner can be justified?

Now, if there ever was one such instance from the beginning of the world? (And have there not been, and are there not ten thousand times ten thousand?) it plainly follows, that Faith is, in the above sense, the sole condition of Justification.

7. It does not become poor, guilty, sinful worms, who receive whatsoever blessings they enjoy, (from the least drop of water that cools our tongue, to the immense riches of glory in eternity,) of grace, of mere favour, and not of debt, to ask of God the reasons of his conduct. It is not meet for us to call him in question, "who giveth account to none of his ways;" to demand, Why didst thou make Faith the condition, the only condition of Justification? Wherefore didst thou decree, *He that believeth*, and he only, *shall be saved?* This is the very point on which St. Paul so strongly insists in the ninth chapter of this Epistle, viz. That the

terms of pardon and acceptance must depend, not on us, but *on him that calleth us:* that there is no *unrighteousness with God*, in fixing his own terms, not according to our, but his own good pleasure: who may justly say, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy," namely, on him who believeth in Jesus. "So then it is not of him that willeth, or of him that runneth," to choose the condition on which he shall find acceptance; "but of God that sheweth mercy," that accepteth none at all, but of his own free love, his unmerited goodness. "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy," viz. on those who believe on the Son of his Love: *and whom he will*, that is, those who believe not, *he hardeneth*, leaves at last to the hardness of their hearts.

8. One reason, however, we may humbly conceive, of God's fixing this condition of Justification, "if thou believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, thou shalt be saved," was to *hide pride from man.* Pride had already destroyed the very Angels of God, had cast down "a third part of the stars of heaven." It was likewise in great measure owing to this, when the tempter said, "Ye shall be as gods," that Adam fell from his own steadfastness, and brought sin and death into the world. It was therefore an instance of wisdom worthy of God, to appoint such a condition of reconciliation, for him and all his posterity, as might effectually humble, might abase them to the dust. And such is Faith. It is peculiarly fitted for this end. For he that cometh unto God by this Faith, must fix his eye singly on his own wickedness, on his guilt and helplessness, without having the least regard to any supposed good in himself, to any virtue or righteousness whatsoever. He must come as a *mere sinner*, inwardly and outwardly, self-destroyed and self-condemned, bringing nothing to God but ungodliness only, pleading nothing of his own but sin and misery. Thus it is, and thus alone, when his *mouth is stopped*, and he stands utterly *guilty before* God, that he can *look unto Jesus*, as the whole and sole *Propitiation for his sins.* Thus only can he be *found in him*, and receive the "righteousness which is of God by Faith."

9. Thou ungodly one, who hearest or readest these words, thou vile, helpless, miserable sinner, I charge thee before God, the Judge of all, go straight unto him, with all thy ungodliness. Take heed thou destroy not thine own soul by pleading thy righteousness more or less. Go as altogether ungodly, guilty, lost, destroyed, deserving, and dropping into hell: and thou shalt then find favour in his sight, and know that he justifieth the ungodly. As such thou shalt be brought unto the *blood of sprinkling*, as an undone, helpless, damned sinner. Thus *look unto Jesus!* There is *the Lamb of God*, who *taketh away* thy *sins!* Plead thou no works, no righteousness of thine own! No humility, contrition, sincerity. In no wise. That were in very deed, to deny the Lord that bought thee. No. Plead thou singly, the Blood of the Covenant, the ransom paid for thy proud, stubborn, sinful soul. Who art thou, that now seest and feelest both thine inward and outward ungodliness? Thou art the man! I want thee for my Lord. I challenge *thee* for a child of God by Faith. The Lord hath need of thee. Thou who feelest thou art just fit for hell, art just fit to advance his glory: the glory of his free grace, justifying the ungodly and him that worketh not. O come quickly! Believe in the Lord Jesus: and thou, even thou art reconciled to God.

SERMON VI.

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF FAITH.

Romans x. 5—8.

"*Moses describeth the Righteousness which is of the Law, That the man which doeth those Things, shall live by them.*

"*But the Righteousness which is of Faith speaketh on this wise; Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into Heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:)*

"*Or, Who shall descend into the Deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the Dead.)*

"*But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is the Word of Faith which we preach.*"

1. THE Apostle does not here oppose the Covenant given by Moses, to the Covenant given by Christ. If we ever imagined this, it was for want of observing, that the latter, as well as the former part of these words, were spoken by Moses himself, to the people of Israel, and that concerning the Covenant which then was. (Deut. xxx. 11, 12, 14.) But it is the Covenant of Grace, which God, through Christ, hath established with men in all ages, (as well before, and under the Jewish dispensation, as since God was manifest in the flesh), which St. Paul here opposes to the Covenant of Works, made with Adam, while in Paradise; but commonly supposed to be the only Covenant which God had made with man, particularly by those Jews of whom the Apostle writes.

2. Of these, it was, that he so affectionately speaks, in the beginning of this chapter. "My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they may be saved. For I bear them record, that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness," (of the Justification that flows from his mere grace and mercy, freely forgiving our sins, through the Son of his love, through the redemption which is in Jesus,) "and seeking to establish their own righteousness," (their own holiness, antecedent to Faith in "him that justifieth the ungodly," as the ground of their pardon and acceptance,) "have not submitted themselves unto the righteousnss of God," and consequently seek death in the error of their life.

3. They were ignorant, that "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth;" that by the oblation of himself once offered, he had put an end to the first Law or Covenant, (which, indeed, was not given by God to Moses, but to Adam in his state of innocence,) the strict tenor whereof, without any abatement, was, "Do this and live:" and at the same time, purchased for us that better Covenant, "Believe and live:" Believe, and thou shalt be saved; now saved both from the guilt and power of sin, and, of consequence, from the wages of it.

4. And how many are equally ignorant now, even among those who are called by the name of Christ? How many who have now a *zeal for God*, yet have it not *according to knowledge:* but are still "seeking to establish their own righteousness," as the ground of their pardon and acceptance; and, therefore, vehemently refuse to "submit themselves to the righteousness of God?" Surely my heart's desire, and prayer to God for you, brethren, is, that ye may be saved. And, in order to remove this grand stumbling-block out of your way, I will endeavour to shew, First, What the *righteousness* is, *which is of the Law*, and what *the righteousness which is of Faith:* Secondly, The folly of trusting in *the righteousness of the Law*, and the wisdom of *submitting to that which is of Faith.*

I. 1. And, first, "The righteousness which is of the law, saith, The man which doth these things, shall live by them." Constantly and perfectly observe all these things to do them, and then thou shalt live for ever. This Law, or Covenant, (usually called, The Covenant of Works) given by God to man in Paradise, required an obedience, perfect in all its parts, entire and wanting nothing, as the condition of eternal continuance in the holiness and happiness wherein he was created.

2. It required, That man should fulfil all righteousness, inward and outward, negative and positive: That he should not only abstain from every idle word; and avoid every evil work, but should keep every affection, every desire, every thought, in obedience to the Will of God. That he should continue holy, as he who had created him, was holy, both in heart, and in all manner of conversation; that he should be pure in heart, even as God is pure; perfect as his Father in heaven was perfect: That he should love the Lord his God, with all his heart, with all his soul, with all his mind, and with all his strength; that he should love every soul which God hath made, even as God had loved him: that, by this universal benevolence, he should dwell in God, (who is love) and God in him: that he should serve the Lord his God with all his strength, and in all things singly aim at his glory.

3. These were the things which the righteousness of the law required, that he who did them, might live thereby. But it farther required, That this entire obedience to God, this inward and outward holiness, this conformity both of heart and life to his will, should be perfect in *degree*. No abatement, no allowance could possibly be made, for falling short in any degree, as to any jot or tittle, either of the outward or the inward Law. If every commandment, relating to outward things, was obeyed, yet that was not sufficient, unless every one was obeyed with all the strength, in the highest measure, and most perfect manner. Nor did it answer the demand of this Covenant, to love God with every power

and faculty, unless he were loved with the full capacity of each, with the whole possibility of the soul.

4. One thing more was indispensably required by the righteousness of the law, namely, that this universal obedience, this perfect holiness both of heart and life, should be perfectly uninterrupted also, should continue without any intermission, from the moment wherein God created man, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, until the days of his trial should be ended, and he should be confirmed in life everlasting.

5. The righteousness then, which is of the Law, speaketh on this wise: "Thou, O man of God, stand fast in love, in the image of God, wherein thou art made. If thou wilt remain in life, keep the commandments, which are now written in thy heart. Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart. Love as thyself, every soul that he hath made. Desire nothing but God. Aim at God in every thought, in every word and work. Swerve not in one motion of body or soul, from him, thy mark, and the prize of thy high calling. And let all that is in thee, praise his holy name, every power and faculty of thy soul, in every kind, in every degree, and at every moment of thine existence. "This do, and thou shalt live:" thy light shall shine, thy love shall flame more and more, till thou art received up into the house of God, in the heavens, to reign with him for ever and ever."

6. "But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise: Say not in thine heart, who shall ascend into heaven, that is, to bring down Christ from above," (as though it were some impossible task, which God required thee previously to perform, in order to thine acceptance:) "Or, who shall descend into the deep, that is, to bring up Christ from the dead;" (as though that were still remaining to be done, for the sake of which, thou wert to be accepted.) "But what saith it? The word," according to the tenor of which, thou mayest now be accepted as an heir of life eternal, "is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that is, the word of Faith, which we preach:" the new

covenant which God hath now established with sinful man, through Christ Jesus.

7. "By the Righteousness which is of Faith," is meant, that condition of Justification, (and in consequence, of present and final salvation, if we endure therein unto the end,) which was given by God, to *fallen man*, through the merits, and mediation of his only begotten Son. This was in part revealed to Adam, soon after his fall, being contained in the original promise, made to him, and his seed, concerning the Seed of the Woman, who should "bruise the Serpent's head," Gen. iii. 12. It was a little more clearly revealed to Abraham, by the Angel of God, from heaven, saying, "By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, that in thy Seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed," Gen. xxii. 15, 18. It was yet more fully made known to Moses, to David, and to the Prophets, that followed: and through them, to many of the people of God, in their respective generations. But still the bulk even of these were ignorant of it; and very few understood it clearly. Still *life and immortality* were not so *brought to light* to the Jews of old, as they are now unto us *by the gospel.*

8. Now this covenant saith not to sinful man, "Perform unsinning obedience, and live." If this were the term, he would have no more benefit by all which Christ hath done and suffered for him, than if he were required, in order to life, to "ascend into heaven, and bring down Christ from above;" or, to "descend into the deep," into the invisible world, and "bring up Christ from the dead." It doth not require any impossibility to be done, (although to mere man, what it requires would be impossible; but not to man assisted by the Spirit of God:) this were only to mock human weakness. Indeed, strictly speaking, the Covenant of *Grace* doth not require us, to *do* any thing at all, as absolutely and indispensably necessary, in order to our justification: but only, to *believe* in him, who, for the sake of his Son, and the propitiation which he hath made, "justifieth the ungodly, that worketh not," and imputes his faith to him for righteousness. Even so Abraham "believed in the

Lord, and he counted it to him for righteousness," Gen xv. 6. "And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of faith,"—that he might be the father of all them that believe,—that righteousness might be imputed unto them also, Rom. iv. 11. "Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it; [i. e. Faith] was imputed to him. But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed," to whom Faith shall be imputed for righteousness, shall stand in the stead of perfect obedience, in order to our acceptance with God, "if we believe on him, who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead: who was delivered [to death] for our offences, and was raised again for our Justification:" Rom. iv. 23, 24, 25. For the assurance of the remission of our sins, and of a second life to come, to them that believe.

9. What saith then the covenant of forgivenesss, of unmerited love, of pardoning mercy? "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." In the day thou believest, thou shalt surely live. Thou shalt be restored to the favour of God; and in his pleasure is life. Thou shalt be saved from the curse, and from the wrath of God. Thou shalt be quickened from the death of sin, into the life of righteousness. And if thou endure to the end, believing in Jesus, thou shalt never taste the second death; but having suffered with thy Lord, shalt also live, and reign with him for ever and ever.

10. Now "this word is nigh thee." This condition of life, is plain, easy, always at hand. "It is in thy mouth, and in thy heart," through the operation of the Spirit of God. The moment "thou believest in thine heart" in him, whom God "hath raised from the dead," and "confessest with thy mouth, the Lord Jesus," as *thy* Lord and *thy* God, *thou shalt be saved* from condemnation, from the guilt and punishment of thy former sins, and shalt have power to serve God in true holiness, all the remaining days of thy life.

11. What is the difference then between the "righteousness which is of the Law," and the "righteousness which is of Faith?" Between the first Covenant, or the Covenant

of Works, and the second, the Covenant of Grace? The essential, unchangeable difference is this: the one supposes him to whom it is given, to be already holy and happy, created in the image and enjoying the favour of God; and prescribes the condition whereon he might continue therein, in love and joy, life and immortality. The other supposes him to whom it is given, to be now unholy and unhappy; fallen short of the glorious image of God, having the wrath of God abiding on him, and hastening, through sin, whereby his soul is dead, to bodily death, and death everlasting. And to man in this state, it prescribes the condition, whereon he may regain the pearl he has lost: may recover the favour and the image of God; may retrieve the life of God in his soul, and be restored to the knowledge and the love of God, which is the beginning of life eternal.

12. Again, the Covenant of Works, in order to man's *continuance* in the favour of God, in his knowledge and love, in holiness and happiness, required of perfect man, a *perfect* and uninterrupted *obedience* to every point of the law of God. Whereas, the Covenant of Grace, in order to man's *recovery* of the favour and the life of God, requires only *faith;* living faith in him, who, through God, justifies him that "obeyed not."

13. Yet, again. The Covenant of Works required of Adam and all his children, to "pay the price themselves," in consideration of which they were to receive all the future blessings of God. But, in the Covenant of Grace, seeing we have nothing to pay, God "frankly forgives us all:" provided only, that we believe in him, who hath "paid the price for us;" who hath given himself a "Propitiation for our sins, for the sins of the whole world."

14. Thus the first Covenant required what is now *afar off* from all the children of men; namely, unsinning obedience, which is far from those who are "conceived and born in sin." Whereas, the second requires what is nigh at hand; as though it should say, Thou art sin! God is love! Thou by sin art fallen short of the glory of God; yet there is mercy with him. Bring then all thy sins to the pardoning

God, and they shall vanish away as a cloud. If thou wert not ungodly, there would be no room for him to justify thee as ungodly. But now draw near, in full assurance of faith. He speaketh and it is done. Fear not, only believe; for even the just God, "justifieth all that believe in Jesus."

II. 1. These things considered, it will be easy to shew, as I proposed to do in the second place, the folly of trusting in the "righteousness which is of the Law," and the wisdom of "submitting to the righteousness which is of faith."

The folly of those who still trust in the "righteousness which is of the Law," the terms of which are, Do this and live, may abundantly appear from hence. They set out wrong: their very first step is a fundamental mistake: for, before they can ever think of claiming any blessing, on the terms of this Covenant, they must suppose themselves to be in his state, with whom this Covenant was made. But how vain a supposition is this! Since it was made with Adam in a state of innocence. How weak, therefore, must that whole building be, which stands on such a foundation! And how foolish are they who thus build on the sand! Who seem never to have considered, that the Covenant of Works was not given to man, when he was dead in trespasses and sins, but when he was alive to God, when he knew no sin, but was holy as God is holy: who forget, that it was never designed for the *recovery* of the favour and life of God once lost, but only for the *continuance* and increase thereof, till it should be complete in life everlasting.

2. Neither do they consider, who are thus "seeking to establish their own righteousness, which is of the Law," what manner of obedience or righteousness that is, which the Law indispensably requires. It must be perfect and entire, in every point, or it answers not the demand of the Law. But which of you is able to perform such obedience? Or, consequently, to live thereby? Who among you fulfils every jot and tittle, even of the outward commandments of God? Doing nothing, great or small, which God forbids? Leaving nothing undone which he enjoins? Speaking no *idle*

words? Having your conversation always "meet to minister grace to the hearers?" And, "whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, doing all to the glory of God?" And how much less are you able to fulfil all the inward commandments of God! Those which require, that every temper and motion of your soul should be holiness unto the Lord! Are you able, to "love God with all your heart?" To love all mankind as your own soul? To "pray without ceasing? In every thing to give thanks?" To have God always before you? And to keep every affection, desire, and thought, in obedience to his Law?

3. You should farther consider, that the righteousness of the Law requires, not only the obeying every command of God, negative and positive, internal and external, but likewise in the most perfect degree. In every instance, whatever, the voice of the Law is, Thou shalt serve the Lord thy God, with all thy strength. It allows no abatement of any kind: it condemns every coming short of the full measure of obedience, and immediately pronounces a curse on the offender: it regards only the invariable rules of Justice, and saith, "I know not to shew mercy."

4. Who then can appear before such a Judge, who is "extreme to mark what is done amiss?" How weak are they who desire to be tried at the bar, where "no flesh living can be justified?" None of the offspring of Adam. For, suppose, we did now keep every commandment with all our strength: yet one single breach which ever was, utterly destroys our whole claim to life. If we have ever offended in any one point, this righteousness is at an end. For the Law condemns all who do not perform uninterrupted as well as perfect obedience. So that, according to the sentence of this, for him who hath once sinned, in any degree, "there remaineth only a fearful looking-for of fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries of God."

5. Is it not then the very foolishness of folly, for fallen man to seek life by this righteousness? For man, who was "shapen in wickedness, and in sin did his mother conceive him?" man, who is, by nature, all "earthly, sensual,

devilish," altogether "corrupt and abominable?" in whom, till he find grace, "dwelleth no good thing;" nay, who cannot of himself think one good thought? Who is indeed all sin, a mere lump of ungodliness, and who commits sin in every breath he draws; whose actual transgressions, in word and deed, are more in number than the hairs of his head? What stupidity, what senselessness must it be for such an unclean, guilty, helpless worm as this, to dream of seeking acceptance by "his own righteousness," of living by *the righteousness* which *is of the Law?*

6. Now, whatsoever considerations prove the folly of trusting in the "righteousness which is of the Law," prove equally the wisdom of submitting to the "righteousness which is of God, by Faith." This were easy to be shewn with regard to each of the preceding considerations. But to wave this, the wisdom of the first step hereto, the disclaiming our own righteousness, plainly appears from hence, that it is acting according to truth, to the real nature of things. For, what is it more, than to acknowledge with our heart, as well as lips, the true state wherein we are? To acknowledge, that we bring with us into the world, a corrupt, sinful nature: more corrupt, indeed, than we can easily conceive, or find words to express? That hereby we are prone to all that is evil, and averse from all that is good: that we are full of pride, self-will, unruly passions, foolish desires, vile and inordinate affections; lovers of the world, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God? That our lives have been no better than our hearts, but many ways ungodly and unholy; insomuch, that our actual sins, both in word and deed, have been as the stars of heaven for multitude: that, on all these accounts, we are displeasing to him, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; and deserve nothing from him, but indignation, and wrath, and death, the due wages of sin? That we cannot, by any of our righteousness, (for, indeed, we have none at all), nor by any of our works, (for they are as the tree from which they grow,) appease the wrath of God, or avert the punishment we have justly deserved; yea, that, if left to ourselves, we shall only

wax worse and worse, sink deeper and deeper into sin, offend God more and more, both with our evil works, and with the evil tempers of our carnal minds, till we fill up the measure of our iniquities, and bring upon ourselves swift destruction? And is not this the very state wherein by nature we are? To acknowledge this then, both with our heart and lips, that is, to disclaim our own righteousness, "the righteouness which is of the Law," is to act according to the real nature of things, and, consequently, is an instance of true wisdom.

7. The wisdom of submitting to "the righteousness of Faith," appears farther from this consideration, that it is the righteousness of God: I mean here, it is that method of reconciliation with God which hath been chosen and established by God himself, not only as he is the God of Wisdom, but as he is the Sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, and of every creature which he hath made. Now, as it is not meet for man to say unto God, What dost thou? As none who is not utterly void of understanding, will contend with one that is mightier than he, with him whose kingdom ruleth over all; so it is true wisdom, it is a mark of sound understanding, to acquiesce in whatever he hath chosen, to say in this, as in all things, "It is the Lord: Let him do what seemeth him good."

8. It may be farther considered, that it was of mere grace, of free love, of undeserved mercy, that God hath vouchsafed to sinful man, any way of reconciliation with himself, that we were not cast away from his hand, and utterly blotted out of his remembrance. Therefore, whatever method he is pleased to appoint, of his tender mercy, of his unmerited goodness, whereby his enemies, who have so deeply revolted from him, so long and obstinately rebelled against him, may still find favour in his sight, it is doubtless our wisdom to accept with all thankfulness.

9. To mention but one consideration more. It is wisdom to aim at the best end by the best means. Now the best end which any creature can pursue, is happiness in God. And the best end a fallen creature can pursue is, the recovery of

the favour and image of God. But the best, indeed the only means under heaven given to man, whereby he may regain the favour of God, which is better than life itself, or the image of God, which is the true life of the soul, is the submitting to the "Righteousness which is of Faith," the believing in the only begotten Son of God.

III. 1. Whosoever, therefore, thou art, who desirest to be forgiven and reconciled to the favour of God; do not say in thy heart, 'I must *first do this;* I must *first* conquer every sin; break off every evil word and work, and do all good to all men: or, I must *first* go to Church, receive the Lord's-Supper, hear more sermons, and say more prayers.' Alas, my brother! thou art clean gone out of the way. Thou art still "ignorant of the righteousness of God," and art "seeking to establish thy own righteousness," as the ground of thy reconciliation. Knowest thou not, that thou canst do nothing but sin, till thou art reconciled to God? Wherefore then dost thou say, I *must do this* and this *first*, and then I shall believe. Nay, but *First Believe.* Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Propitiation for thy sins. Let this good foundation first be laid, and then thou shalt do all things well.

2. Neither say in thy heart, 'I cannot be accepted yet, because I am not *good enough.*' Who is *good enough?* Who ever was? To merit acceptance at God's hands! Was ever any child of Adam *good enough* for this? Or, will any, till the consummation of all things? And, as for thee, thou art not good at all: there dwelleth in thee no good thing. And thou never wilt be good, till thou believe in Jesus. Rather thou wilt find thyself worse and worse. But is there any need of being worse, in order to be accepted? Art thou not *bad enough* already? Indeed, thou art, and that God knoweth. And thou thyself canst not deny it. Then delay not. All things are now ready. "Arise, and wash away thy sins." The fountain is open. Now he shall *purge* thee as *with hyssop, and* thou *shalt be clean: he* shall *wash* thee, and thou *shalt be whiter than snow.*

3. Do not say, 'But I am not *contrite enough:* I am not

sensible enough of my sins.' I know it. I would to God, thou wert more *sensible* of them, more *contrite* a thousand fold than thou art. But do not stay for this. It may be, God will make thee so, not before thou believest, but by believing. It may be, thou wilt not weep much, till thou lovest much, because thou hast had much forgiven. In the mean time, look unto Jesus. Behold, how he loveth thee! What could he have done more for thee which he hath not done?

> "O Lamb of God, was ever pain,
> Was ever love like thine!"

Look steadily upon him, till he looks on thee, and breaks thy hard heart. Then shall thy *head* be *waters, and* thy *eyes fountains of tears.*

4. Nor yet do thou say, 'I must *do* something more *before* I come to Christ.' I grant, supposing thy Lord should delay his coming, it were meet and right to wait for his appearing, in doing so far as thou hast power, whatsoever he hath commanded thee. But there is no necessity for making such a supposition. How knowest thou that he will delay? Perhaps he will appear, as the day-spring from on high, before the morning light. O, do not set him a time! Expect him every hour. Now, he is nigh! Even at the door!

5. And to what end wouldst thou wait for *more sincerity, before* thy sins are blotted out? To make thee more worthy of the grace of God? Alas, thou art still "establishing thy own righteousness." He will have mercy, not because thou art worthy of it, but because his compassions fail not: not because thou art righteous; but, because Jesus Christ hath atoned for thy sins.

Again, if there be any thing good in *sincerity*, why dost thou expect it *before* thou hast Faith? Seeing Faith itself is the only root of whatever is really good and holy.

Above all, how long wilt thou forget, that whatsoever thou dost, or whatsoever thou hast, before thy sins are forgiven thee, it avails nothing with God, toward the procuring of thy forgiveness? Yea, and that it must all be cast be-

hind thy back, trampled under foot, made no account of, or thou wilt never find favour in God's sight; because, until then, thou canst not ask it, as a mere sinner, guilty, lost, undone, having nothing to plead, nothing to offer to God, but only the merits of his well-beloved Son, *who loved* thee, *and gave himself for* thee.

6. To conclude. Whosoever thou art, O man, who hast the sentence of death in thyself, who feelest thyself a condemned sinner, and hast the wrath of God abiding on thee: unto thee saith the Lord, Not, Do this: perfectly obey all my commands and live: but, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." *The word of Faith is nigh unto thee;* now, at this instant, in the present moment, and in thy present state, sinner as thou art, just as thou art, Believe the Gospel: and *I will be merciful unto* thy *unrighteousness, and* thy *iniquities will I remember no more.*

SERMON VII.

THE WAY TO THE KINGDOM.

Mark i. 15.

"The Kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the Gospel."

THESE words naturally lead us to consider, first, The Nature of True Religion, here termed by our Lord, *The Kingdom of God*, which, saith he, *is at hand:* and, secondly, The Way thereto, which he points out in those words; *Repent ye, and believe the Gospel.*

I. 1. We are, first, to consider the Nature of True Religion, here termed by our Lord, *The Kingdom of God.* The same expression the great Apostle uses in his epistle to the Romans, where he likewise explains his Lord's words, saying, "The Kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," xiv. 17.

2. *The Kingdom of God*, or True Religion, *is not meat and drink.* It is well known, that not only the unconverted Jews, but great numbers of those who had received the Faith of Christ, were, notwithstanding, *zealous of the Law*, Acts xxi. 20, even the Ceremonial Law of Moses. Whatsoever therefore they found written therein, either concerning meat and drink offerings, or the distinction between clean and unclean meats, they not only observed themselves,

but vehemently pressed the same, even on those "among the Gentiles (or Heathens) who were turned to God." Yea, to such a degree, that some of them taught, wheresoever they came among them, "Except ye be circumcised, and keep the Law, (the whole Ritual Law,) ye cannot be saved," Acts xv. 1, 24.

3. In opposition to these, the Apostle declares, both here and in many other places, that True Religion does not consist in *meat* and *drink*, or in any Ritual Observances: nor, indeed, in any outward thing whatever, in any thing exterior to the heart; the whole substance thereof being in "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

4. Not in any *outward thing;* such as *forms* or *ceremonies*, even of the most excellent kind. Supposing these to be ever so decent and significant, ever so expressive of inward things: supposing them ever so helpful, not only to the vulgar, whose thought reaches little farther than their sight; but even to men of understanding, men of stronger capacities, as doubtless they may sometimes be: yea, supposing them, as in the case of the Jews, to be appointed by God himself; yet even during the period of time, wherein that appointment remains in force, True Religion does not principally consist therein; nay, strictly speaking, not at all. How much more must this hold concerning such Rights and Forms, as are only of human appointment! The Religion of Christ rises infinitely higher, and lies immensely deeper than all these. These are good in their place; just so far as they are in fact subservient to true Religion. And it were superstition to object against them, while they are applied only as occasional helps to human weakness. But let no man carry them further. Let no man dream, that they have any intrinsic worth; or that religion cannot subsist without them. This were to make them an abomination to the Lord.

5. The nature of Religion is so far from consisting in these, in *Forms* of worship, or *Rites* and *Ceremonies*, that it does not properly consist in any *outward actions*, of what kind soever. It is true, a man cannot have any Religion who is

guilty of vicious, immoral actions; or who does to others, what he would not they should do to him, if he were in the same circumstance. And it is also true, that he can have no real Religion, who "knows to do good, and doth it not." Yet may a man both abstain from outward evil, and do good, and still have no religion. Yea, two persons may do the same outward work; suppose, feeding the hungry, or clothing the naked: and, in the mean time, one of these may be truly religious, and the other have no religion at all: for the one may act from the love of God, and the other from the love of praise. So manifest it is; that although true religion naturally leads to every good word and work, yet the real nature thereof lies deeper still, even in "the hidden man of the heart."

6. I say of *the heart.* For neither does Religion consist in *Orthodoxy* or *right opinions;* which, although they are properly outward things, are not in the heart, but the understanding. A man may be orthodox in every point; he may not only espouse right opinions, but zealously defend them against all opposers: he may think justly concerning the incarnation of our Lord, concerning the ever blessed Trinity, and every other doctrine, contained in the Oracles of God: he may assent to all the three Creeds; that called the Apostles, the *Nicene*, and the *Athanasian:* and, yet it is possible, he may have no Religion at all, no more than a Jew, Turk, or Pagan. He may be almost as orthodox—as the devil; (though indeed, not altogether. For every man errs in something; whereas we cannot well conceive him to hold any erroneous opinion) and may, all the while, be as great a stranger as he, to the religion of the heart.

7. This alone is Religion, truly so called: this alone is in the sight of God of great price. The Apostle sums it all up in three particulars, "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." And, first, *righteousness.* We cannot be at a loss concerning this, if we remember the words of our Lord, describing the two grand branches thereof, on which "hang all the Law and the Prophets." "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy mind,

and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength. This is the First and great Commandment," (Mark xii. 30.) the first and great branch of Christian righteousness. Thou shalt delight thyself in the Lord thy God; thou shalt seek and find all happiness in him. He shall be "thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward," in time, and in eternity. All thy bones shall say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth, that I desire beside thee!" Thou shalt hear, and fulfil his word, who saith, "My son, give me thy heart." And, having given him thy heart, thy inmost soul, to reign there without a rival, thou mayest well cry out, in the fulness of thy heart, "I will love thee, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my strong Rock, and my defence; my Saviour, my God, and my might, in whom I will trust; my buckler, the horn also of my salvation, and my refuge."

8. And the Second Commandment is like unto this; the second great branch of Christian righteousness is closely and inseparably connected therewith, even "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." *Thou shalt love*—Thou shalt embrace with the most tender good-will, the most earnest and cordial affection, the most enflamed desires of preventing or removing all evil, and of procuring for him every possible good,—*Thy neighbour;*—that is, not only thy friend, thy kinsman, or thy acquaintance; not only the virtuous, the friendly, him that loves thee, that prevents, or returns thy kindness; but every child of man, every human creature, every soul which God hath made; not excepting him whom thou never hast seen in the flesh, whom thou knowest not, either by face or name: not excepting him whom thou knowest to be evil and unthankful, him that still despitefully uses and persecutes thee. Him thou shalt *love as thyself;* with the same invariable thirst after his happiness in every kind; the same unwearied care to screen him from whatever might grieve or hurt, either his soul or body.

9. Now is not this love "The fulfilling of the Law?" The sum of all Christian righteousness? Of all inward right-

eousness: for it necessarily implies "bowels of mercy, humbleness of mind," (seeing "love is not puffed up) gentleness, meekness, long-suffering," (for love "is not provoked;" but "believeth, hopeth, endureth all things);" and of all outward righteousness; for "love worketh no evil to his neighbour," either by word or deed. It cannot willingly either hurt or grieve any one. And it is zealous of good works. Every lover of mankind, as he hath opportunity, "doth good unto all men," being "(without partiality, and without hypocrisy) full of mercy, and good fruits."

10. But true Religion, or a heart right toward God and man, implies happiness, as well as holiness. For it is not only *righteousness*, but also "peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." What peace? *The peace of* God, which God only can give, and the world cannot take away: the peace which "passeth all understanding," all (barely) rational conception; being a supernatural sensation, a divine taste of "the powers of the world to come:" such as the natural man knoweth not, how wise soever in the things of this world: nor, indeed, can he know it, in his present state, "because it is spiritually discerned." It is a peace that banishes all doubt, all painful uncertainty; the Spirit of God bearing witness with the spirit of a Christian, that he is *a child of God*. And it banishes fear, all such fear as hath torment; the fear of the wrath of God, the fear of hell, the fear of the devil, and in particular, the fear of death: he that hath the peace of God, desiring, if it were the will of God, "to depart, and to be with God."

11. With this peace of God, wherever it is fixed in the soul, there is also "joy in the Holy Ghost:" joy wrought in the heart by the Holy Ghost, by the ever-blessed Spirit of God. He, it is, that worketh in us, that calm, humble rejoicing in God, through Christ Jesus, "by whom we have now received the Atonement," καταλλαγην, the reconciliation with God; and that enables us boldly to confirm the truth of the royal Psalmist's declaration, "Blessed is the man (or rather *happy*) [illegible], whose unrighteousness is forgiven, and whose sin is covered." He it is, that inspires

the Christian soul, with that even, solid joy, which arises from the testimony of the Spirit, that he is a child of God; and that gives him to "rejoice with joy unspeakable, in hope of the glory of God;" hope both of the glorious image of God, which is in part, and shall be fully "revealed in him:" and of that crown of Glory, which fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for him.

12. This holiness and happiness joined in one, are sometimes stiled in the inspired Writings, the *kingdom of God*, (as by our Lord in the text) and sometimes, *The kingdom of heaven*. It is termed *the kingdom of God*, because it is the immediate fruit of God's reigning in the soul. So soon as ever he takes unto himself his mighty power, and sets up his throne in our hearts, they are instantly filled with this "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." It is called *the kingdom of heaven*, because it is (in a degree), heaven opened in the soul. For whosoever they are, that experience this, they can aver before angels and men,

Everlasting life is won:
Glory is on earth begun:

According to the constant tenor of Scripture, which every where bears record, God "hath given unto us, eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son" (reigning in his heart) "hath life," (even life everlasting), 1 John v. 11, 12. "For this is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent," John xvii. 3. And they, to whom this is given, may confidently address God, though they were in the midst of a fiery furnace,

"Thee,—Lord, safe shielded by thy power,
Thee, Son of God, JEHOVAH, we adore;
In form of man, descending to appear:
To thee be ceaseless hallelujahs given.
Praise, as in heaven thy throne, we offer here;
For where thy presence is display'd, is heaven."

13. And *this kingdom of God*, or of heaven, *is at hand.*

As these words were originally spoken, they implied, that *the time* was then fulfilled, God being "made manifest in the flesh," when he would set up his kingdom among men, and reign in the hearts of his people. And is not the time now fulfilled? For, "Lo! (saith he) I am with you always," you who preach remission of sins in my name, "even unto the end of the world," (Matt. xxviii. 20.) Wheresoever, therefore, the gospel of Christ is preached, this his "kingdom is nigh at hand." It is not far from every one of you. Ye may this hour, enter thereinto, if so be, ye hearken to his voice, "Repent ye, and believe the Gospel."

II. 1. This is the way. Walk ye in it. And, first, Repent, that is, Know yourselves. This is the first Repentance, previous to Faith: even conviction, or self-knowledge. Awake then, thou that sleepest. Know thyself to be a sinner, and what manner of sinner thou art. Know that corruption of thy inmost nature, whereby thou art very far gone from original righteousness, whereby "the flesh lusteth" always "contrary to the Spirit," through that "carnal mind which is enmity against God," which "is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be." Know that thou art corrupted in every power, in every faculty of thy soul; that thou art totally corrupted in every one of these, all the foundations being out of course. The eyes of thine understanding are darkened, so that they cannot discern God, or the things of God. The clouds of ignorance and error rest upon thee, and cover thee with the shadow of death. Thou knowest nothing yet, as thou oughtest to know, neither God, nor the world, nor thyself. Thy will is no longer the will of God, but is utterly perverse and distorted, averse from all good, from all which God loves, and prone to all evil, to every abomination which God hateth. Thy affections are alienated from God, and scattered abroad over all the earth. All thy passions, both thy desires and aversions, thy joys and sorrows, thy hopes and fears, are out of frame, are either undue in their degree, or placed on undue objects. So that there is no soundness in thy soul; but "from the crown of the head, to the sole of the foot," (to use the strong expres-

sion of the Prophet) there are only "wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores."

Such is the inbred corruption of thy heart, of thy very inmost nature. And what manner of branches canst thou expect to grow, from such an evil root? Hence springs unbelief, ever departing from the living God: saying, "Who is the Lord, that I should serve him? Tush! Thou God, carest not for it." Hence independence, affecting to be like the Most High; hence pride in all its forms, teaching thee to say, "I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing." From this evil fountain, flow forth the bitter streams of vanity, thirst of praise; ambition, covetousness; the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. From this arise anger, hatred, malice, revenge, envy, jealousy, evil surmisings: from this, all the foolish and hurtful lusts, that now "pierce thee through with many sorrows," and, if not timely prevented, will at length "drown thy soul in everlasting perdition."

3. And what fruits can grow on such branches as these? Only such as are bitter and evil continually. Of pride cometh contention, vain boasting, seeking and receiving praise of men, and so robbing God of that glory which he cannot give unto another. Of the lust of the flesh, come gluttony or drunkenness, luxury or sensuality: fornication, uncleanness, variously defiling that body, which was designed for a temple of the Holy Ghost: of unbelief, every evil word and work. But the time would fail, shouldst thou reckon up all: all the idle words thou hast spoken, provoking the Most High, grieving the Holy One of Israel: all the evil works thou hast done, either wholly evil in themselves, or at least, not done to the glory of God. For thy actual sins are more than thou art able to express, more than the hairs of thy head. Who can number the sands of the sea, or the drops of rain, or thy iniquities?

4. And knowest thou not that "the wages of sin is death?" Death not only temporal, but eternal. "The soul that sinneth, it shall surely die:" for the mouth of the Lord hath

spoken it. It shall die the second death. This is the sentence, to *be punished* with never-ending death, "with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." Knowest thou not that every sinner, ενοχος εστι τη γεεννη του πυρος; not properly *is in danger of hell-fire*, that expression is far too weak: but rather, *is under the sentence of hell-fire*, doomed already, just dragging to execution. Thou art guilty of everlasting death. It is the just reward of thy inward and outward wickedness. It is just, that the sentence should now take place. Dost thou see, dost thou feel this? Art thou thoroughly convinced, that thou deservest God's wrath, and everlasting damnation? Would God do thee any wrong, if he commanded the earth to open, and swallow thee up? If thou wert now to go down quick into the pit, into the fire that never shall be quenched? If God hath given thee truly to repent, thou hast a deep sense that these things are so; and that it is of his mere mercy, thou art not consumed, swept away from the face of the earth.

5. And what wilt thou do to appease the wrath of God, to atone for all thy sins, and to escape the punishment thou hast so justly deserved? Alas, thou canst do nothing: nothing that will in any wise make amends to God, for one evil work, or word, or thought. If thou couldst now do all things well, if from this very hour, till thy soul should return to God, thou couldst perform perfect, uninterrupted obedience, even this would not atone for what is past. The not increasing thy debt would not discharge it. It would still remain as great as ever. Yea, the present and the future obedience of all the men upon earth, and all the angels in heaven, would never make satisfaction to the justice of God for one single sin. How vain then was the thought, of atoning for thy own sins, by any thing thou couldst do! It costeth far more to redeem one soul, than all mankind is able to pay. So that were there no other help for a guilty sinner, without doubt, he must have perished everlastingly.

6. But suppose perfect obedience, for the time to come,

could atone for the sins that are past, this would profit thee nothing; for thou art not able to perform it; no, not in any one point. Begin now: make the trial. Shake off that outward sin that so easily besetteth thee. Thou canst not. How then wilt thou change thy life from all evil to all good? Indeed, it is impossible to be done, unless first thy heart be changed. For, so long as the tree remains evil, it cannot bring forth good fruit. But art thou able to change thy own heart, from all sin to all holiness? To quicken a soul that is dead in sin? Dead to God, and alive only to the world? No more than thou art able to quicken a dead body, to raise to life, him that lieth in the grave. Yea, thou art not able to quicken thy soul in any degree, no more than to give any degree of life to the dead body. Thou canst do nothing more or less, in this matter; thou art utterly without strength. To be deeply sensible of this, how helpless thou art, as well as how guilty and how sinful, this is that "repentance not to be repented of," which is the Forerunner of the Kingdom of God.

7. If to this lively conviction of thy inward and outward sins, of thy utter guiltiness and helplessness, there be added suitable affections, sorrow of heart, for having despised thy own mercies, remorse, and self-condemnation, having thy mouth stopped, shame to lift up thine eyes to heaven: fear of the wrath of God abiding on thee, of his curse hanging over thy head, and of the fiery indignation ready to devour those who forget God, and obey not our Lord Jesus Christ: earnest desire to escape from that indignation, to cease from evil, and learn to do well: then I say unto thee, in the name of the Lord, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." One step more and thou shalt enter in. Thou dost *repent*. Now, "Believe the Gospel."

8. *The Gospel*, (that is, good tidings, good news for guilty, helpless sinners), in the largest sense of the word, means, the whole Revelation made to man by Jesus Christ; and sometimes the whole account of what our Lord did and suffered, while he tabernacled among men. The substance

of all is, "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." Or, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, to the end we might not perish, but have everlasting life." Or, "he was bruised for our transgressions, he was wounded for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed."

9. Believe this, and the kingdom of God is thine. By faith thou attainest the promise. "He pardoneth and absolveth all that truly repent, and unfeignedly believe his holy gospel." As soon as ever God hath spoken to thy heart, "Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee," his kingdom comes: thou hast righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

10. Only beware thou do not deceive thy own soul, with regard to the nature of this Faith. It is not, as some have fondly conceived, a bare assent to the truth of the Bible, of the Articles of our Creed, or of all that is contained in the Old and New Testament. The devils believe this, as well as I or thou! And yet they are devils still. But it is, over and above this, a sure trust in the mercy of God, through Christ Jesus. It is a confidence in a pardoning God. It is a divine evidence or conviction, that "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing to them their former trespasses:" and, in particular, that the Son of God hath loved *me*, and given himself for *me*: and that I, even I, am now reconciled to God by the blood of the cross.

11. Dost thou thus believe? Then the peace of God is in thy heart, and sorrowing and sighing flee away. Thou art no longer in doubt of the love of God; it is clear as the noon-day sun. Thou criest out, "My song shall be always of the loving-kindness of the Lord: with my mouth will I ever be telling of thy truth, from one generation to another." Thou art no longer afraid of hell, or death, or him that had once the power of death, the devil: no, nor painfully afraid of God himself; only thou hast a tender,

filial fear of offending him. Dost thou believe? Then thy "soul doth magnify the Lord, and thy spirit rejoiceth in God thy Saviour." Thou rejoicest in that thou hast "redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." Thou rejoicest in that "Spirit of Adoption, which crieth in thy heart, Abba, Father!" Thou rejoicest in a "hope full of immortality," in reaching forth unto the "mark of the prize of thy high calling;" in an earnest expectation of all the good things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

12. Dost thou now believe? Then *the love of God* is now *shed abroad in thy heart.* Thou lovest him, because he first loved us. And, because thou lovest God, thou lovest thy brother also. And, being filled with "love, peace, joy," thou art also filled with "long-suffering, gentleness, fidelity, goodness, meekness, temperance," and all the other fruits of the same Spirit: in a word, with whatever dispositions are holy, are heavenly, or divine. For while thou *beholdest with open,* uncovered *face,* (the veil now being taken away) *the glory of the Lord,* his glorious love, and the glorious image wherein thou wast created, thou art "changed into the same image, from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord."

13. This repentance, this faith, this peace, joy, love; this change from glory to glory, is what the wisdom of the world has voted to be madness, mere enthusiasm, utter distraction. But thou, O man of God, regard them not; be thou moved by none of these things. Thou knowest in whom thou hast believed. See that no man take thy crown. Whereunto thou hast already attained, hold fast, and follow, till thou attain all the great and precious promises. And thou who hast not yet known him, let not vain men make thee ashamed of the gospel of Christ. Be thou in nothing terrified by those who speak evil of the things which they know not. God will soon turn thy heaviness into joy. O let not thy hands hang down. Yet a little longer, and he will take away thy fears, and give thee the

spirit of a sound mind. "He is nigh that justifieth: who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea, rather that rose again; who is even now at the right hand of God, making intercession for thee."

Now cast thyself on the Lamb of God, with all thy sins, how many soever they be; and "an entrance shall [now] be ministered unto thee, into the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!"

SERMON VIII.

THE FIRST FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT.

ROMANS viii. 1.

" *There is therefore now no Condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the Flesh, but after the Spirit.*"

1. " BY them which are in Christ Jesus," St. Paul evidently means, those who truly believe in him: those who " being justified by faith, have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." They who thus believe do no longer " walk after the flesh," no longer follow the motions of corrupt nature, but " after the Spirit:" both their thoughts, words, and works, are under the direction of the blessed Spirit of God.

2. " There is therefore now no condemnation to" these. There is no condemnation to them from God: for he hath *justified* them " freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus." He hath forgiven all their iniquities, and blotted out all their sins. And there is no condemnation to them from within; for they " have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that they might know the things which are freely given to them of God," 1 Cor. ii. 12: which Spirit " beareth witness with their spirits, that they are the children of God." And to this is added, the testimony of their conscience: " that in simpli-

city and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, they have their conversation in the world," 2 Cor. i. 12.

2. But, because this scripture has been so frequently misunderstood, and that in so dangerous a manner; because such multitudes of "unlearned and unstable men," (οἱ ἀμαθεῖς καὶ ἀστήρικτοι, men untaught of God, and consequently unestablished in *the truth, which is after godliness)* have *wrested* it *to their own destruction;* I propose to shew, as clearly as I can, first, Who those are "which are in Christ Jesus, and walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit:" and, secondly, How "there is no condemnation to" them. I shall conclude with some practical inferences.

I. 1. First I am to shew, Who those are that "are in Christ Jesus." And are they not, those who believe in his name? Those who are "found in him, not having their own righteousness, but the righteousness which is of God by Faith?" These, who *have redemption through his blood*, are properly said to be *in Him*. For *they dwell in Christ, and Christ in them*. They are *joined unto the Lord in one Spirit*. They are ingrafted into him as Branches into the Vine. They are united, as Members to their Head, in a manner which words cannot express, nor could it before enter into their hearts to conceive.

2. Now, "whosoever abideth in him, sinneth not; walketh not after the flesh." The flesh, in the usual language of St. Paul, signifies corrupt nature. In this sense, he uses the word, writing to the Galatians, "The works of the flesh are manifest," Gal. v. 19. And a little before, "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust (or desire) of the flesh," v. 16. To prove which, namely, that those who "walk by the Spirit, do not fulfil the lusts of the flesh," he adds, "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit; and the Spirit lusteth against the flesh, (for these are contrary to each other), that ye may not do the things which ye would." So the words are literally translated, (ἵνα μὴ ἃ ἐὰν θέλητε ταῦτα ποιῆτε.) Not, "So that ye cannot do the things that ye

would," as if the flesh overcame the Spirit: a translation which hath not only nothing to do with the original text of the Apostle, but likewise makes his whole argument nothing worth; yea, asserts just the reverse of what he is proving.

3. "They who are in Christ, who abide in him, have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts." They abstain from all those works of the flesh; from "adultery and fornication;" from "uncleanness and lasciviousness;" from "idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance;" from "emulations, wrath, strife, sedition, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings:" from every design, and word, and work, to which the corruption of nature leads. Although they feel the root of bitterness in themselves, yet are they endued with power from on high, to trample it continually under foot, so that it cannot "spring up to trouble them:" insomuch, that every fresh assault which they undergo, only gives them fresh occasion of praise, of crying out, "Thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

4. They now "walk after the Spirit," both in their hearts and lives. They are taught of him to love God and their neighbour, with a love which is as "a well of water, springing up into everlasting life." And by him they are led into every holy desire, into every divine and holy temper, till every thought, which arises in the heart, is holiness unto the Lord.

5. They who "walk after the Spirit," are also led by him, into all holiness of conversation. Their speech is "always in grace, seasoned with salt," with the love and fear of God. "No corrupt communication comes out of their mouth, but only that which is good;" that which is "to the use of edifying," which is "meet to minister grace to the hearers." And herein likewise do they exercise themselves day and night, to do only the things which please God: in all their outward behaviour to follow him, "who left us an example that we might tread in his steps:" in all

their intercourse with their neighbour to walk in justice, mercy, and truth; and "whatsoever they do," in every circumstance of life, to "do all to the glory of God."

6. These are they who indeed "walk by the Spirit." Being filled with faith and with the Holy Ghost, they possess in their hearts, and shew forth in their lives, in the whole course of their words and actions, the genuine fruits of the Spirit of God, namely, "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, temperance," and whatsoever else is lovely or praise-worthy. They "adorn in all things the gospel of God our Saviour;" and give full proof to all mankind, that they are indeed actuated by the same Spirit, "which raised up Jesus from the dead."

II. I proposed to shew, in the second place, How "there is no condemnation to them which are thus in Christ Jesus, and thus walk, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

And, first, To believers in Christ, walking thus, "there is no condemnation" on account of their past sins. God condemneth them not for any of these; they are as though they had never been. They are cast "as a stone into the depth of the sea," and he remembereth them no more. God having "set forth his Son to be a Propitiation for them, through faith in his blood, hath declared unto them his righteousness, for the remission of the sins that are past." He layeth therefore none of these to their charge; their memorial is perished with them.

2. And there is no condemnation in their own breast; no sense of guilt, or dread of the wrath of God. They "have the witness in themselves:" they are conscious of their interest in the Blood of Sprinkling. "They have not received again the Spirit of Bondage unto fear," unto doubt and racking uncertainty; but they "have received the Spirit of Adoption, crying in their hearts, Abba, Father." Thus being "justified by faith, they have the peace" of God ruling in their hearts: flowing from a continual sense of his

pardoning mercy, and "the answer of a good conscience toward God."

3. If it be said, "But sometimes a believer in Christ may lose his sight of the mercy of God; sometimes such darkness may fall upon him that he no longer sees Him that is invisible, no longer feels that witness in himself of his part in the atoning Blood; and then he is inwardly condemned; he hath again *the sentence of death in himself:*" I answer, supposing it so to be, supposing him not to see the mercy of God, then he is not a believer: for faith implies light; the light of God shining upon the soul. So far, therefore, as any one loses this light, he, for the time, loses his faith. And, no doubt, a true believer in Christ, may lose the light of faith. And so far as this is lost, he may, for a time, fall again into condemnation. But this is not the case of them who now "are in Christ Jesus," who now believe in his name. For so long as they believe and walk after the Spirit, neither God condemns them nor their own heart.

4. They are not condemned, secondly, for any present sins, for now transgressing the commandments of God. For they do not transgress them: they do not "walk after the flesh, but after the Spirit." This is the continual proof of their "love of God, that they keep his commandments:" even as St. John bears witness, "whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin. For his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God:" he cannot, so long as that seed of God, that loving, holy faith remaineth in him. So long as "he keepeth himself" herein, "that wicked one toucheth him not." Now it is evident, he is not condemned for the sins which he doth not commit at all. They, therefore, who are thus "led by the Spirit, are not under the law," Gal. v. 18. Not under the curse or condemnation of it; for it condemns none but those who break it. Thus, that law of God, "Thou shalt not steal," condemns none but those who do steal. Thus, "Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy," condemns those only who do

not keep it holy. But against the fruits of the Spirit, "there is no law;" v. 23. As the Apostle more largely declares, in those memorable words of his first epistle to Timothy. "We know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully; knowing this," (if while he uses the law of God, in order either to convince or direct, he knows and remembers this) ὅτι δικαίῳ νόμος οὐ κεῖται. (Not that the law is not made for a righteous man; but) "That the law does not lie against a righteous man," it has no force against him, no power to condemn him, "but against the lawless and disobedient, against the ungodly and sinners, against the unholy and profane; according to the glorious Gospel of the blessed God," 1 Tim. i. 8, 9, 11.

5. They are not condemned, thirdly, for inward sin, even though it does now remain. That the corruption of nature does still remain, even in those who are the children of God by faith; that they have in them the seeds of pride and vanity, of anger, lust, and evil desire; yea, sin of every kind, is too plain to be denied, being matter of daily experience. And, on this account it is, that St. Paul, speaking to those, whom he had just before witnessed to be "in Christ Jesus," 1 Cor. i. 2, 9; to have been "called of God into the fellowship (or participation) of his Son Jesus Christ;" yet declares, "Brethren, I could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal; even as unto babes in Christ," 1 Cor. iii. 1. "Babes in Christ:" So we see they were "in Christ;" they were believers in a low degree. And yet how much of sin remained in them! Of that "carnal mind, which is not subject to the law of God."

6. And yet, for all this, they are not condemned. Although they feel the flesh, the evil nature in them; although they are more sensible, day by day, that their "heart is deceitful and desperately wicked:" yet, so long as they do not yield thereto; so long as they give no place to the devil; so long as they maintain a continual war with all sin, with pride, anger, desire, so that the flesh hath not do-

minion over them, but they still "walk after the Spirit:" there is "no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." God is well-pleased with their sincere, though imperfect obedience: and they "have confidence toward God, knowing they are his, by the Spirit which he hath given them," 1 John iii. 24.

7. Nay, fourthly, although they are continually convinced of sin cleaving to all they do: although they are conscious of not fulfilling the perfect law, either in their thoughts, or words, or works; although they know they do not love the Lord their God with all their heart, and mind, and soul, and strength; although they feel, more or less, of pride or self-will, stealing in and mixing with their best duties; although even in their more immediate intercourse with God, when they assemble themselves with the great congregation; and when they pour out their souls in secret to him, who seeth all the thoughts and intents of the heart, they are continually ashamed of their wandering thoughts, or of the deadness and dulness of their affections: yet there is no condemnation to them still, either from God or from their own heart. The consideration of these manifold defects only gives them a deeper sense, that they have always need of the Blood of Sprinkling, which speaks for them in the ears of God, and that Advocate with the Father, "who ever liveth to make intercession for them." So far are these from driving them away from him, in whom they have believed, that they rather drive them the closer to him, whom they feel the want of every moment. And, at the same time, the deeper sense they have of this want, the more earnest desire do they feel, and the more diligent they are, as they "have received the Lord Jesus, so to walk in him."

8. They are not condemned, fifthly, for "sins of infirmity," as they are usually called. (Perhaps it were advisable rather to call them *infirmities*, that we may not seem to give any countenance to sin, or to extenuate it in any degree, by thus coupling it with infirmity. But, if we must retain so ambiguous and dangerous an expression) by "sins

of infirmity" I would mean, such involuntary failings, as the saying a thing we believe true, though, in fact, it prove to be false; or, the hurting our neighbour, without knowing or designing it, perhaps when we designed to do him good. Though these are deviations from the holy, and acceptable, and perfect will of God, yet they are not properly sins, nor do they bring any guilt on the conscience of "them which are in Christ Jesus." They separate not between God and them, neither intercept the light of his countenance; as being no ways inconsistent with their general character of "walking not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

9. Lastly, "There is no condemnation" to them for any thing whatever, which is not in their power to help; whether it be of an inward or outward nature, and whether it be doing something, or leaving something undone. For instance: the Lord's-Supper is to be administered. But you do not partake thereof. Why do you not? You are confined by sickness; therefore, you cannot help omitting it; and, for the same reason, you are not condemned. There is no guilt, because there is no choice. As there "is a willing mind, it is accepted, according to that a man hath, not according to that he hath not."

10. A believer indeed may sometimes be *grieved*, because he cannot do what his soul longs for. He may cry out, when he is detained from worshipping God in the great congregation, "Like as the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panted my soul after thee, O God. My soul is athirst for God, yea, even for the living God: when shall I come to appear in the presence of God?" He may earnestly desire (only still saying in his heart, not as I will, but as thou wilt) to "go again with the multitude, and bring them forth into the house of God." But still if he cannot go, he feels no condemnation, no guilt, no sense of God's displeasure; but can cheerfully yield up those desires with, "Oh, my soul! put thy trust in God. For I will yet give him thanks, who is the help of my countenance and my God."

11. It is more difficult to determine concerning those which are usually stiled, *sins of surprise:* as when one who commonly in patience possesses his soul, on a sudden and violent temptation, speaks or acts in a manner not consistent with the Royal Law, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Perhaps it is not easy to fix a general rule, concerning transgressions of this nature. We cannot say, either that men are, or that they are not condemned, for sins of surprise in general. But it seems, whenever a believer is by surprise overtaken in a fault, there is more or less condemnation, as there is more or less concurrence of his will. In proportion as a sinful desire, or a word or action, is more or less voluntary, so we may conceive, God is more or less displeased, and there is more or less guilt upon the soul.

12. But if so, then there may be some sins of surprise, which bring much guilt and condemnation. For, in some instances, our being surprised is owing to some wilful and culpable neglect; or, to a sleepiness of soul which might have been prevented, or shaken off before the temptation came. A man may be previously warned either of God or man, that trials and danger are at hand: and yet may say in his heart, "A little more slumber, a little more folding of the hands to rest." Now, if such a one afterwards fall, though unawares, into the snare which he might have avoided; that he fell unawares is no excuse: he might have foreseen and have shunned the danger. The falling, even by surprise, in such an instance as this, is, in effect, a wilful sin; and, as such, must expose the sinner to condemnation, both from God, and his own conscience.

13. On the other hand, there may be sudden assaults, either from the world, or the god of this world, and frequently from our own evil hearts, which we did not, and hardly could, foresee. And by these even a believer, while weak in faith, may possibly be borne down, suppose into a degree of anger, or thinking evil of another, with scarcely any concurrence of his will. Now, in such a case, the

jealous God would undoubtedly shew him that he had done foolishly. He would be convinced of having swerved from the perfect law, from the mind which was in Christ, and, consequently, *grieved* with a godly sorrow, and lovingly *ashamed* before God. Yet need he not come into condemnation. God layeth not folly to his charge, but hath compassion upon him, "even as a father pitieth his own children." And his heart condemneth him not; in the midst of that sorrow and shame, he can still say, "I will trust and not be afraid. For the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he is also become my salvation."

III. It remains only to draw some practical inferences from the preceding considerations.

And, first, If there be "no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, and who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit," on account of their past sins: then, why art thou fearful, O thou of little faith? Though thy sins were once more in number than the sand, what is that to thee, now thou art in Christ Jesus? "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth?" All the sins thou hast committed from thy youth up, until the hour when thou wast "accepted in the Beloved," are driven away as chaff, are gone, are lost, swallowed up, remembered no more. Thou art now "born of the Spirit;" wilt thou be troubled or afraid of what was done before thou wast born? Away with thy fears! Thou art not called to fear, but to the "Spirit of love and of a sound mind." Know thy calling. Rejoice in God thy Saviour, and give thanks to God thy Father through him.

2. Wilt thou say, 'But I have again committed sin, since I had redemption through his blood? And, therefore, it is, that "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."' It is meet thou shouldst abhor thyself; and it is God who hath wrought thee to this self-same thing. But, dost thou now believe? Hath he again enabled thee to say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth; and the life which I now live, I

live by faith in the Son of God." Then that faith again cancels all that is past, and there is no condemnation to thee. At whatsoever time thou truly believest in the name of the Son of God, all thy sins, antecedent to that hour, vanish away as the morning dew. Now then, "Stand thou fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made thee free." He hath once more made thee free from the power of sin, as well as from the guilt and punishment of it. Oh, "be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage!" Neither the vile, devilish bondage of sin; of evil desires, evil tempers, or words, or works, the most grievous yoke on this side hell: nor the bondage of slavish, tormenting fear, of guilt and self-condemnation.

3. But, secondly: Do all they who abide "in Christ Jesus, walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit?" Then we cannot but infer, that whosoever now committeth sin, hath no part nor lot in this matter. He is even now condemned by his own heart. But, "if our heart condemn us," if our own conscience bear witness that we are guilty, undoubtedly God doth: for "he is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things;" so that we cannot deceive him, if we can ourselves. And think not to say, 'I was justified once; my sins were once forgiven me:' I know not that; neither will I dispute whether they were or not. Perhaps, at this distance of time, it is next to impossible to know, with any tolerable degree of certainty, whether that was a true, genuine work of God, or whether thou didst only deceive thy own soul. But this I know, with the utmost degree of certainty, "He that committeth sin is of the devil." Therefore, thou art of thy father the devil. It cannot be denied: for the works of thy father thou dost. O flatter not thyself with vain hopes. Say not to thy soul, Peace, peace! For there is no peace. Cry aloud! Cry unto God out of the deep; if happily he may hear thy voice. Come unto him as at first, as wretched and poor, as sinful, miserable, blind, and naked. And beware thou suffer thy soul to take no rest, till his pardoning love be again revealed; till he "heal

thy backslidings," and fill thee again with the "faith that worketh by love."

4. Thirdly, Is there no condemnation to them which "walk after the Spirit," by reason of *inward sin* still remaining, so long as they do not give way thereto; nor by reason of *sin cleaving* to all they do? Then fret not thyself because of ungodliness, though it still remain in thy heart. Repine not, because thou still comest short of the glorious image of God: nor yet, because pride, self-will, or unbelief, cleave to all thy words and works. And be not afraid to know all this evil of thy heart, to know thyself as also thou art known. Yea, desire of God, that thou mayest not think of thyself more highly than thou oughtest to think. Let thy continual prayer be,

"Shew me, as my soul can bear,
The depth of inbred sin:
All the unbelief declare,
The pride that lurks within."

But when he heareth thy prayer, and unveils thy heart; when he shews thee thoroughly what spirit thou art of: then beware that thy Faith fail thee not, that thou suffer not thy shield to be torn from thee. Be abased. Be humbled in the dust. See thyself nothing, less than nothing and vanity. But still, "let not thy heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." Still hold fast, "I, even I, have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous. And as the heavens are higher than the earth, so is his love higher than even my sins." Therefore, God is merciful to thee a sinner! Such a sinner as thou art! God is Love; and Christ hath died. Therefore, the Father himself loveth thee. Thou art his child. Therefore he will with-hold from thee no manner of thing that is good. Is it good, that the whole body of sin, which is now crucified in thee, should be destroyed? It shall be done. Thou shalt be "cleansed from all filthiness, both of flesh and spirit." Is it good, that nothing should remain in thy heart, but the pure love of God alone? Be of good cheer! "Thou shalt love the Lord thy

God, with all thy heart, and mind, and soul, and strength." "Faithful is he that hath promised, who also will do it." It is thy part, patiently to continue in the work of Faith, and in the labour of Love; and in cheerful peace, in humble confidence, with calm and resigned, and yet earnest expectation, to wait till the "zeal of the Lord of Hosts shall perform this."

5. Fourthly, If they that "are in Christ, and walk after the Spirit," are not condemned for *sins of infirmity*, as neither for *involuntary failings*, nor for any thing whatever which they are not able to help: then beware, O thou that hast faith in his blood, that Satan herein "gain no advantage over thee." Thou art still foolish and weak, blind and ignorant. More weak than any words can express, more foolish than it can yet enter into thy heart to conceive, knowing nothing yet as thou oughtest to know. Yet let not all thy weakness and folly, or any fruit thereof, which thou art not yet able to avoid, shake thy faith, thy filial trust in God, or disturb thy peace or joy in the Lord. The rule which some give, as to wilful sins, and which, in that case, may perhaps be dangerous, is undoubtedly wise and safe, if it be applied only to the case of weakness and infirmities. Art thou fallen, O man of God? Yet, do not lie there, fretting thyself and bewaining thy weakness: but meekly say, Lord, I shall fall thus every moment, unless thou uphold me with thy hand. And then arise! Leap and walk. Go on thy way. "Run with patience the race set before thee."

6. Lastly. Since a believer need not come into condemnation, even though he be *surprised* into what his soul abhors, (suppose his being surprised is not owing to any carelessness or wilful neglect of his own:) if thou who believest, art thus overtaken in a fault, then grieve unto the Lord; it shall be a precious balm: pour out thy heart before him, and shew him of thy trouble. And pray with all thy might to him who is "touched with the feeling of thy infirmities," that he would stablish, and strengthen, and

settle thy soul, and suffer thee to fall no more. But still he condemneth thee not. Wherefore shouldest thou fear? Thou hast no need of any "fear that hath torment." Thou shalt love him that loveth thee, and it sufficeth: more love will bring more strength. And, as soon as thou lovest him with all thy heart, thou shalt be "perfect and entire, lacking nothing." Wait in peace for that hour, when "the God of Peace shall sanctify thee wholly, so that thy whole spirit, and soul, and body, may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ!"

SERMON IX.

THE

SPIRIT OF BONDAGE AND ADOPTION.

ROMANS viii. 15.

"*Ye have not received the Spirit of Bondage again to fear: but ye have received the Spirit of Adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.*"

1. ST. PAUL here speaks to those who are the children of God by Faith. "Ye," saith he, who are indeed his children, have drank into his Spirit. Ye "have not received the Spirit of Bondage again to fear. But, because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts. Ye have received the Spirit of Adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father."

2. The Spirit of Bondage and Fear is widely distant from this loving Spirit of Adoption: those who are influenced only by slavish fear, cannot be termed, "The sons of God." Yet some of them may be styled his servants, and are "not far from the kingdom of heaven."

3. But it is to be feared, the bulk of mankind, yea, of what is called *The Christian World*, have not attained even this; but are still afar of, "neither is God in all their thoughts." A few names may be found of those who love God: a few more there are that fear him. But the greater part have neither the fear of God before their eyes, nor the love of God in their hearts.

4. Perhaps most of you, who, by the mercy of God, now partake of a better spirit, may remember the time when ye were as they, when ye were under the same condemnation. But at first ye knew it not, though ye were wallowing daily in your sins and in your blood; till, in due time, ye "received the Spirit of Fear; (*ye received*, for this also is the gift of God:) and afterwards, fear vanished away, and the Spirit of Love filled your hearts.

5. One who is in the first state of mind, without fear or love, is in Scripture termed a *natural man*. One who is under the Spirit of Bondage and Fear, is sometimes said to be *under the Law:* (although that expression more frequently signifies one who is under the Jewish Dispensation, who thinks himself obliged to observe all the Rites and Ceremonies of the Jewish Law.) But one who has exchanged the Spirit of Fear for the Spirit of Love, is properly said to be *under Grace*.

Now, because it highly imports us, to know what spirit we are of, I shall endeavour to point out distinctly, First, The state of a *natural Man:* Secondly, That of one who is *under the Law:* and, Thirdly, of one who is *under Grace*.

I. 1. And, First, the state of a *natural Man*. This the Scripture represents as a state of sleep: the voice of God to him is, "Awake, thou that sleepest." For his soul is in a deep sleep. His spiritual senses are not awake: they discern neither spiritual good nor evil. The eyes of his understanding are closed; they are sealed together, and see not. Clouds and darkness continually rest upon them; he lies in the valley of the shadow of death. Hence, having no inlets for the knowledge of spiritual things, all the avenues of his soul being shut up, he is in gross, stupid ignorance of whatever he is most concerned to know. He is utterly ignorant of God, knowing nothing concerning him as he ought to know. He is totally a stranger to the Law of God, as to its true, inward, spiritual meaning. He has no conception of that evangelical holiness, without which no man can see the

Lord; nor of the happiness, which they only find, whose "Life is hid with Christ in God."

2. And, for this very reason, because he is fast asleep, he is, in some sense, at rest. Because he is blind, he is also secure: he saith, "Tush, there shall no harm happen unto me." The darkness which covers him on every side, keeps him in a kind of peace: (so far as peace can consist with the works of the devil, and with an earthly, devilish mind.) He *sees* not that he stands on the edge of the pit, therefore he *fears* it not. He cannot *tremble* at the danger he does not *know*. He has not understanding enough to fear. Why is it that he is in no dread of God? Because he is totally ignorant of him: if not, "saying in his heart, There is no God; or, that he sitteth on the circle of the heavens, and humbleth not himself to behold the things which are done on earth:" Yet, satisfying himself as well, to all Epicurean intents and purposes, by saying, "God is merciful:" confounding and swallowing up at once, in that unweildy idea of mercy, all his holiness and essential hatred of sin; all his justice, wisdom, and truth. He is in no dread of the vengeance denounced against those who obey not the blessed Law of God, because he understands it not. He imagines the main point is, To *do thus*, to be *outwardly* blameless: and sees not that it extends to every temper, desire, thought, motion of the heart. Or, he fancies, that the obligation hereto is ceased; that Christ came to "destroy the Law and the Prophets;" to save his people *in*, not *from* their sins; to bring them to heaven, without holiness. Notwithstanding his own words, "Not one jot or tittle of the Law shall pass away, till all things are fulfilled: and, not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord! shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the Will of my Father which is in heaven."

3. He is secure, because he is utterly ignorant of himself. Hence he talks of "repenting by and by," he does not indeed exactly know when; but some time or other before he dies: taking it for granted, that this is quite in his own power. For what should hinder his doing it, if he will?

If he do but once set a resolution, no fear but he will make it good.

4. But this ignorance never so strongly glares, as in those who are termed, *Men of Learning*. If a natural man be one of these, he can talk at large of his rational faculties; of the freedom of his will, and the absolute necessity of such freedom, in order to constitute man a moral agent. He reads, and argues, and proves to a demonstration, that every man may do as he will; may dispose his own heart to evil or good, as it seems best in his own eyes. Thus the god of this world spreads a double veil of blindness over his heart, lest, by any means, "the Light of the glorious Gospel of Christ should shine" upon it.

5. From the same ignorance of himself and God, there may some times arise in the natural man, a kind of *joy*, in congratulating himself, upon his own wisdom and goodness. And what the world calls joy, he may often possess. He may have pleasure of various kinds; either in gratifying the desires of the flesh, or the desire of the eye, or the pride of life: particularly if he have large possessions; if he enjoy an affluent fortune. Then he may *clothe* himself "in purple and fine linen, and fare sumptuously every day." And *so long as* he thus *doth well unto himself*, *men will* doubtless *speak good of him*. They will say, 'He is a happy man.' For, indeed, this is the sum of worldly happiness: to dress, and visit, and talk, and eat, and drink, and rise up to play.

6. It is not surprising, if one in such circumstances as these, dozed with the opiates of flattery and sin, should imagine, among his other waking dreams, that he walks in great *liberty*. How easily may he persuade himself, that he is at liberty from all *vulgar errors*, and from the *prejudice* of education, judging exactly right, and keeping clear of all extremes. 'I am free (may he say) from all the *enthusiasm* of weak and narrow souls: from *superstition*, the disease of fools and cowards, always righteous over much; and from *bigotry*, continually incident to those who have not a free and generous way of thinking." And too sure

it is, that he is altogether free, from the "Wisdom which cometh from above," from holiness, from the religion of the heart, from the whole mind which was in Christ.

7. For all this time he is the servant of sin. He commits sin, more or less, day by day. Yet he is not troubled: he "is in no bondage;" as some speak, he feels no condemnation. He contents himself, (even though he should profess to believe, that the Christian Revelation is of God,) with, "Man is frail. We are all weak. Every man has his infirmity." Perhaps he quotes Scripture: "Why, does not Solomon say,—The righteous man falls into sin seven times a day!—And, doubtless, they are all hypocrites or enthusiasts who pretend to be better than their neighbours." If, at any time, a serious thought fix upon him, he stifles it as soon as possible, with, "Why should I fear, since God is merciful, and Christ died for sinners?" Thus he remains a willing servant of sin, content with the bondage of corruption; inwardly and outwardly unholy, and satisfied therewith; not only not conquering sin, but not striving to conquer, particularly that sin, which doth so easily beset him.

8. Such is the state of every *natural man;* whether he be a gross, scandalous transgressor, or a more reputable and decent sinner, having the form, though not the power of godliness. But how can such a one be *convinced of sin?* How is he brought to *repent?* To be *under the Law?* To receive the *Spirit of Bondage unto Fear?* This is the point which is next to be considered.

II. 1. By some awful providence, or by his word applied with the demonstration of his Spirit, God touches the heart of him that lies asleep in darkness and in the shadow of death. He is terribly shaken out of his sleep, and awakes into a consciousness of his danger. Perhaps in a moment, perhaps by degrees, the eyes of his understanding are opened, and now first (the veil being in part removed) discern the real state he is in. Horrid light breaks in upon his soul: such light, as may be conceived to gleam from the bottomless pit, from the lowest deep, from a lake of fire,

burning with brimstone. He at last sees the loving, the merciful God, is also "a consuming fire;" that he is a just God and a terrible, rendering to every man according to his works, entering into judgment with the ungodly for every idle word, yea, and for the imaginations of the heart. He now clearly perceives, that the great and holy God is "of purer eyes than to behold iniquity;" that he is an avenger of every one who rebelleth against him, and repayeth the wicked to his face; and that "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

2. The inward, spiritual meaning of the Law of God now begins to glare upon him. He perceives "the commandment is exceeding broad, and there is nothing hid from the light thereof." He is convinced, that every part of it relates, not barely to outward sin or obedience, but to what passes in the secret recesses of the soul, which no eye but God's can penetrate. If he now hear, "Thou shalt not kill," God speaks in thunder, "He that hateth his brother is a murderer." He that saith unto his brother, "Thou fool, is obnoxious to hell-fire." If the Law say, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," the voice of the Lord sounds in his ears, "He that looketh on a woman, to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." And thus in every point, he feels the word of God, "quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword." It pierces even *to the dividing asunder of* his *soul and spirit*, his *joints and marrow*. And so much the more, because he is conscious to *himself* of having neglected so great salvation; of having "trodden under foot the Son of God," who would have saved him from his sins, and "counted the Blood of the Covenant an unholy," a common, unsanctifying *thing*.

3. And as he knows, "all things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do," so he sees himself naked, stripped of all the fig-leaves which he had sewed together, of all his poor pretences to religion or virtue, and his wretched excuses for sinning against God. He now sees himself like the ancient sacrifices, τετραχηλισμενον, cleft in sunder, as it were, from the neck downward, so that

all within him stands confest. His heart is bare, and he sees it is all sin, "deceitful above all things, desperately wicked;" that it is altogether corrupt and abominable, more than it is possible for tongue to express: that there dwelleth therein no good thing, but unrighteousness and ungodliness only; every motion thereof, every temper and thought, being only evil continually.

4. And he not only sees, but feels in himself, by an emotion of soul which he cannot describe, that for the sins of his heart, were his life without blame, which yet it is not, and cannot be: seeing "an evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit;") he deserves to be cast into the fire that never shall be quenched. He feels that the *wages*, the just reward *of sin*, of his sin above all, *is death;* even the second death, the death which dieth not, the destruction of body and soul in hell.

5. Here ends his pleasing dream, his delusive rest, his false peace, his vain security. His joy now vanishes as a cloud; pleasures, once loved, delight no more. They pall upon the taste; he lothes the nauseous sweet; he is weary to bear them. The shadows of happiness flee away, and sink into oblivion. So that he is stripped of all, and wanders to and fro, seeking rest, but finding none.

6. The fumes of those opiates being now dispelled, he feels the anguish of a wounded spirit. He finds that sin let loose upon the soul (whether it be pride, anger, or evil desire, whether self-will, malice, envy, revenge, or any other) is perfect misery. He feels sorrow of heart for the blessings he has lost, and the curse which is come upon him; remorse for having thus destroyed himself, and despised his own mercies; fear, from a lively sense of the wrath of God, and of the punishment which he has justly deserved, and which he sees hanging over his head; fear of death, as being to him the gate of hell, the entrance of death eternal; fear of the devil, the executioner of the wrath and righteous vengeance of God; fear of men, who, if they were able to kill his body, would thereby plunge both body and soul into

hell; fear, sometimes arising to such a height, that the poor, sinful, guilty soul, is terrified with every thing, with nothing, with shades, with a leaf shaken by the wind. Yea, sometimes it may even border upon distraction, making a man "drunken though not with wine," suspending the exercise of the memory, of the understanding, of all the natural faculties. Sometimes it may approach to the very brink of despair: so that he who trembles at the name of death, may yet be ready to plunge into it every moment, to "choose strangling rather than life." Well may such a man *roar*, like him of old, *for the very disquietness of his heart*. Well may he cry out, "The spirit of a man may sustain his infirmities; but a wounded spirit who can bear?"

7. Now he truly desires to break loose from sin, and begins to struggle with it. But though he strive with all his might, he cannot conquer; sin is mightier than he. He would fain escape; but he is so fast in prison, that he cannot get forth. He resolves against sin, but yet sins on: he sees the snare, and abhors, and runs into it. So much does his boasted reason avail! Only to inhance his guilt, and increase his misery. Such is the freedom of his will; free only to evil; free to "drink iniquity in like water;" to wander farther and farther from the living God, and do more "despite to the Spirit of Grace!"

8. The more he strives, wishes, labours to be free, the more does he feel his chains, the grievous chains of sin, wherewith Satan binds and "leads him captive at his will:" his servant he is, though he repine ever so much; though he rebel, he cannot prevail. He is still in bondage and fear, by reason of sin: generally, of some outward sin, to which he is peculiarly disposed, either by nature, custom, or outward circumstances; but always, of some inward sin, some evil temper or unholy affection. And the more he frets against it, the more it prevails; he may bite, but cannot break his chain. Thus he toils without end, repenting and sinning, and repenting and sinning again, till at length the

poor, sinful, helpless wretch, is even at his wit's end; and can barely groan, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!"

9. This whole struggle of one who is *under the Law*, under the *Spirit of Fear and Bondage*, is beautifully described by the Apostle in the fore-going chapter, speaking in the person of an awakened man. "I," saith he, "was alive without the Law once," ver. 9. I had much life, wisdom, strength, and virtue; so I thought: but, when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." When the commandment, in its spiritual meaning, came to my heart, with the power of God, my inbred sin was stirred up, fretted, inflamed, and all my virtue died away. "And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me," ver. 10, 11. It came upon me unawares, slew all my hopes; and plainly shewed, that in the midst of life, I was in death. "Wherefore the Law is holy, and the commandment, holy, and just, and good," ver. 12. I no longer lay the blame on this, but on the corruption of my own heart. I acknowledge that "the Law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin," ver. 14. I now see both the spiritual nature of the Law, and my own carnal, devilish heart; *sold under sin*, totally enslaved: (like slaves bought with money, who were absolutely at their master's disposal.) "For that which I do, I allow not; for what I would, I do not; but what I hate, that I do," ver. 15. Such is the bondage under which I groan; such the tyranny of my hard master. "To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good, I find not. For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do," ver. 18, 19. "I find a law, [an inward constraining power,] that when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in [or consent to] the Law of God, after the inward man," ver. 21, 22. In my mind: so the Apostle explains himself in the words that immediately follow; (and so ο εσω ανθρωπος, *the inward man*, is understood in all other Greek writers.) "But I see

another Law in my members, [another constraining power,] warring against the Law of my mind, or inward man, and bringing me into captivity to the Law, [or power,] of sin," ver. 23: dragging me, as it were, at my conqueror's chariot-wheels, into the very thing which my soul abhors. "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!" ver. 24. Who shall deliver me from this helpless, dying life, from this bondage of sin and misery! Till this be done, *I myself* (or rather, *that I*, αυτος εγω, *that man* I am now personating) *with the mind*, or inward man, *serve the Law of God;* my mind, my conscience are on God's side; *but with the flesh*, with my body, *the Law of sin*, ver. 25; being hurried away by a force I cannot resist.

10. How lively a portraiture is this of one *under the Law!* One who feels the burden he cannot shake off; who pants after liberty, power, and love, but is in fear and bondage still! Until the time that God answers the wretched man, crying out, "Who shall deliver me?" from this bondage of sin, from this body of death? "The grace of God, thro' Jesus Christ thy Lord."

III. 1. Then it is that this miserable bondage ends, and he is no more "under the Law, but under Grace." This state we are, thirdly, to consider, the state of one who has found *grace* or favour, in the sight of God, even the Father, and who has the *peace*, or power of the Holy Ghost, reigning in his heart: who has received, in the language of the Apostle, *the Spirit of Adoption*, *whereby* he now cries, *Abba, Father!*

2. "He cried unto the Lord in his trouble, and God delivers him out of his distress." His eyes are opened in quite another manner than before, even to see a loving, gracious God. While he is calling, "I beseech thee, shew me thy glory!" he hears a voice in his inmost soul, "I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord: I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will shew mercy to whom I will shew mercy." And, it is not long before "the Lord descends in

the cloud, and proclaims the name of the Lord." Then he sees, but not with eyes of flesh and blood, "The Lord, the Lord God: merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth: keeping mercy for thousands, and forgiving iniquities, and transgressions, and sin."

3. Heavenly, healing light now breaks in upon his soul. He "looks on him whom he had pierced; and God, who out of darkness commanded light to shine, shineth in his heart." He "sees the light of the glorious love of God; in the face of Jesus Christ." He hath a divine "evidence of things not seen" by sense, even of "the deep things of God;" more particularly of the love of God, of his pardoning love to him that believes in Jesus. Overpowered with the sight, his whole soul cries out, "My Lord! and my God!" For he sees all his iniquities laid on him, "bare them in his own body on the tree;" he beholds the Lamb of God taking away his sins. How clearly now does he discern, that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself! Making him a sin-offering for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteous people of God through him!" And that he himself is reconciled to God, by that blood of the Covenant!

4. Here end both the guilt and power of sin. He can now say, "I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. And the life which I now live in the flesh, (even in this mortal body,) I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Here end remorse and sorrow of heart, and the anguish of a wounded spirit. "God turneth his heaviness into joy." He *made sore*, and now *his hands bind up*. Here ends also that bondage unto fear; for "his heart standeth fast, believing in the Lord." He cannot fear any longer the wrath of God; for he knows it is now turned away from him, and the Lord looks upon him no more as an angry Judge, but as a loving Father. He cannot fear the devil, knowing he has "no power, except it be given him from above." He fears not hell, being an heir of the kingdom of heaven;

consequently, he has no fear of death: by reason whereof he was in time past, for so many years "subject to bondage." Rather, knowing that "if the earthly house of his tabernacle be dissolved, he hath a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. He groaneth earnestly, desiring to be clothed upon with that house which is from heaven." He groans to shake off this house of earth, that *mortality* may be *swallowed up of life:* knowing that God "hath wrought him for the self same thing: who hath also given him the earnest of his Spirit."

5. And, "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty;" liberty, not only from guilt and fear, but from sin, from that heaviest of all yokes, that basest of all bondage. His labour is not now in vain. The snare is broken, and he is delivered. He not only strives, but likewise prevails; he not only fights, but conquers also. "Henceforth he doth not serve sin," chap. vi. 6, &c. "He is dead unto sin, and alive unto God; sin doth not now reign, even in his mortal body, nor doth he obey it in the desires thereof." He does not "yield his members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but as instruments of righteousness unto God. For being now made free from sin, he is become the servant of righteousness."

6. Thus, "having peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, rejoicing in hope of the glory of God," and having power over all sin, over every evil desire, and temper, and word, and work, he is a living witness of the "glorious liberty of the sons of God:" all of whom, being partakers of *like precious faith*, bear record with one voice, "We have received the Spirit of Adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father!"

7. It is this Spirit which continually "worketh in them, both to will and to do of his good pleasure." It is he that sheds the love of God abroad in their hearts, and the love of all mankind; thereby purifying their hearts from the love of the world, from the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. It is by him they are delivered from anger and pride, from all vile and inordinate affections. In

consequence, they are delivered from evil words and works, from all unholiness of conversation: doing no evil to any child of man, and being zealous of all good works.

8. To sum up all. The *natural* man neither fears nor loves God; one *under the Law*, fears; one *under Grace*, loves him. The first, has no light in the things of God, but walks in utter darkness; the second, sees the painful light of hell; the third, the joyous light of heaven. He that sleeps in death, has a false peace. He that is awakened, has no peace at all. He that believes, has true peace, the peace of God filling and ruling his heart. The Heathen, baptized or unbaptized, hath a fancied liberty, which is indeed licentiousness: the Jew, or one under the Jewish dispensation, is in heavy, grievous bondage; the Christian enjoys the true glorious liberty of the sons of God. An unawakened child of the devil, sins willingly; one that is awakened, sins unwillingly: a child of God *sinneth not*, but "keepeth himself, and the wicked one toucheth him not." To conclude; the natural man neither conquers nor fights; the man under the Law, fights with sin, but cannot conquer; the man under Grace, fights and conquers, yea, is "more than conqueror, through him that loveth him."

IV. 1. From this plain account of the three-fold state of man, the *natural*, the *legal*, and the *evangelical*, it appears, that it is not sufficient, to divide mankind, into sincere and insincere. A man may be sincere in any of these states: not only when he has the "Spirit of Adoption," but while he has the "Spirit of Bondage unto Fear." Yea, while he has neither this fear, nor love. For, undoubtedly there may be sincere Heathens, as well as sincere Jews or Christians. This circumstance then, does by no means prove, that a man is in a state of acceptance with God.

Examine yourselves therefore, not only whether ye are sincere, "but whether ye be in the faith." Examine narrowly; for it imports you much. What is the ruling principle in your soul? Is it the love of God? Is it the fear of God? Or, is it neither one nor the other? Is it not rather, the love of the world? The love of pleasure? Or gain? Or

ease? Or reputation? If so, you are not come so far as a Jew. You are but a Heathen still. Have you heaven in your heart? Have you the Spirit of Adoption, ever crying, Abba, Father? Or, do you cry unto God, as "out of the belly of hell," overwhelmed with sorrow and fear? Or, are you a stranger to this whole affair, and cannot imagine what I mean? Heathen, pull off the mask. Thou hast never put on Christ. Stand barefaced. Look up to heaven. And own before Him that liveth for ever and ever, thou hast no part, either among the sons or servants of God.

Whosoever thou art. Dost thou commit sin, or dost thou not? If thou do, is it willingly, or unwillingly? In either case God hath told thee whose thou art. "He that committeth sin is of the devil." If thou commit it willingly, thou art his faithful servant. He will not fail to reward thy labour. If unwillingly, still thou art his servant. God deliver thee out of his hands!

Art thou daily fighting against all sin? and daily more than conqueror? I acknowledge thee for a child of God. O stand fast in thy glorious liberty. Art thou fighting, but not conquering; striving for the mastery, but not able to attain? Then thou art not yet a believer in Christ; but follow on; and thou shalt know the Lord. Art thou not fighting at all, but leading an easy, indolent, fashionable life? O how hast thou dared to name the name of Christ? Only to make it a reproach among the Heathen? Awake, thou sleeper! Call upon thy God, before the deep swallow thee up.

2. Perhaps one reason why so many think of themselves more highly than they ought to think, why they do not discern what state they are in, is, because these several states of soul, are often mingled together, and in some measure meet in one and the same person. Thus experience shews, that the legal state, or state of fear, is frequently mixed with the natural. For few men are so fast asleep in sin, but they are sometimes, more or less awakened. As the Spirit of God does not "wait for the call of man," so, at some times, he will be heard. He puts them in fear, so that for a season,

at least, the Heathen "know themselves to be but men." They feel the burthen of sin, and earnestly desire to flee from the wrath to come. But not long. They seldom suffer the arrows of conviction to go deep into their souls; but quickly stifle the grace of God, and return to their wallowing in the mire.

In like manner, the evangelical state, or state of love, is frequently mixed with the legal. For few of those who have the Spirit of Bondage and Fear, remain always without hope. The wise and gracious God rarely suffers this; for he remembereth that we are but dust. And he willeth not that "the flesh should fail before him, or the Spirit which he hath made." Therefore, at such times as he seeth good, he gives a dawning of light unto them that sit in darkness. He causes a part of his goodness to pass before them, and shews he is a "God that heareth their prayer." They see the promise, which is by faith in Christ Jesus, though it be yet afar off: and hereby they are encouraged to "run with patience the race which is set before them."

3. Another reason why many deceive themselves, is, because they do not consider how far a man may go, and yet be in a natural, or, at best, a legal state. A man may be of a compassionate and a benevolent temper; he may be affable, courteous, generous, friendly; he may have some degree of meekness, patience, temperance, and of many other moral virtues. He may feel many desires of shaking off all vice, and of attaining higher degrees of virtue. He may abstain from much evil; perhaps from all that is grossly contrary to justice, mercy, or truth. He may do much good, may feed the hungry, clothe the naked, relieve the widow and fatherless. He may attend public worship, use prayer in private, read many books of devotion: and yet for all this, he may be a mere natural man, knowing neither himself nor God; equally a stranger to the spirit of fear and to that of love; having neither repented nor believed the gospel.

But, suppose there were added to all this, a deep conviction of sin, with much fear of the wrath of God; vehement desires to cast off every sin, and to fulfil all righteousness;

frequent rejoicing in hope, and touches of love often glancing upon the soul: yet neither do these prove a man to be *under Grace*, to have true, living, Christian Faith, unless the Spirit of Adoption abide in his heart, unless he can continually cry, Abba, Father!

4. Beware then, thou who art called by the name of Christ, that thou come not short of the mark of thy high calling. Beware thou rest not, either in a natural state, with too many that are accounted *good Christians:* or, in a legal state, wherein those who are *highly esteemed of men*, are generally content to live and die. Nay, but God hath prepared better things for thee, if thou follow on till thou attain. Thou art not called to fear and tremble, like devils, but to rejoice and love, like the angels of God. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." Thou shalt *rejoice evermore*. Thou shalt *pray without ceasing*. Thou shalt *in every thing give thanks*. Thou shalt do the will of God *on earth, as it is done in heaven*. O prove thou "what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." Now present thyself a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God. "Whereunto thou hast already attained, hold fast," by reaching forth unto those things which are before; until "the God of peace make thee perfect in every good work, working in thee that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever! Amen!"

SERMON X.

THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT.

ROMANS viii. 16.

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our Spirit, that we are the Children of God."

1. HOW many vain men, not understanding what they spake, neither whereof they affirmed, have wrested this Scripture, to the great loss, if not the destruction, of their souls? How many have mistaken the voice of their own imagination, for this "Witness of the Spirit of God?" And thence idly presumed, they were the children of God, while they were doing the works of the devil? These are truly and properly Enthusiasts; and, indeed, in the worst sense of the word. But with what difficulty are they convinced thereof? Especially, if they have drank deep into that spirit of error. All endeavours to bring them into the knowledge of themselves, they will then account *fighting against God.* And that vehemence and impetuosity of spirit, which they call "contending earnestly for the faith," sets them so far above all the usual methods of conviction, that we may well say, "With men it is impossible."

2. Who can then be surprised, if many reasonable men, seeing the dreadful effects of this delusion, and labouring to keep at the utmost distance from it, should sometimes lean toward another extreme? If they are not forward to believe

any who speak of having this witness, concerning which others have so grievously erred? If they are almost ready to set all down for Enthusiasts, who use the expressions which have been so terribly abused? Yea, if they should question, whether the witness or testimony here spoken of, be the privilege of *ordinary* Christians, and not rather, one of those *extraordinary* gifts, which they suppose belonged only to the apostolic age.

3. But is there any necessity laid upon us, of running either into one extreme or the other? May we not steer a middle course? Keep at a sufficient distance from the spirit of error and enthusiasm, without denying the gift of God, and giving up the great privilege of his children? Surely we may. In order thereto, let us consider, in the presence and fear of God,

First, What is this *Witness* or *Testimony of our spirit?* What is the *Testimony of God's Spirit?* And how does he "bear witness with our spirit that we are the children of God?"

Secondly, How is this joint testimony of God's Spirit and our own, clearly and solidly distinguished from the presumption of a natural man; and from the delusion of the devil?

I. 1. Let us first consider what is the *Witness* or *Testimony of our spirit.* But here I cannot but desire all those who are for swallowing up the "testimony of the Spirit of God," in the "rational testimony" of our own spirit, to observe, that in this text the Apostle is so far from speaking of the testimony of our spirit *only*, that it may be questioned, whether he speaks of it *at all?* Whether he does not speak, *only* of the testimony of God's Spirit? It does not appear, but the original text may be fairly understood thus: The Apostle had just said, in the preceding verse, "Ye have received the Spirit of Adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father;" and, immediately subjoins, Αυτο το πνευμα (some copies read το αυτο πνευμα) συμμαρτυρει τω πνευματι, ημων, οτι εσμεν τεκνα Θεȣ; which may be translated, "The same Spirit beareth witness to our spirit, that we are the children

of God." (The preposition συν only denoting, that he witnesses this *at the same time* that he enables us to cry, Abba, Father.) But I contend not; seeing so many other texts, with the experience of all real Christians, sufficiently evince, that there is in every believer, both the testimony of God's Spirit, and the testimony of his own, that he is a child of God.

2. With regard to the latter, the foundation thereof is laid in those numerous texts of Scripture, which describe the marks of the children of God, and that so plainly, that he who runneth may read them. These are also collected together, and placed in the strongest light, by many both ancient and modern writers. If any need farther light, he may receive it by attending on the ministry of God's word; by meditating thereon before God in secret, and by conversing with those who have the knowledge of his ways. And by the reason or understanding that God has given him, which religion was designed not to extinguish, but to perfect: according to that of the Apostle, "Brethren, be not children in understanding; in malice [or wickedness] be ye children; but in understanding be ye men," 1 Cor. xiv. 20; every man applying those scriptural marks to himself, may know, whether he is a child of God. Thus, if he know, First, *As many as are led by the Spirit of God*, into all holy tempers and actions, *they are the sons of God*, (for which he has the infallible assurance of holy Writ:) Secondly, I am thus *led by the Spirit of God:* he will easily conclude, therefore I am a *Son of God.*

3. Agreeable to this are all those plain declarations of St. John in his first epistle. "Hereby we know, that we do know him, if we keep his commandments," chap. ii. 3. "Whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected; hereby know we that we are in him," that we are indeed the children of God, ver. 5. "If ye know, that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him," ver. 29. "We know, that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren," chap. iii. 14. "Hereby we know, that we are of

the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him," ver. 19. Namely, because we *love* one another, not in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. "Hereby know we, that we dwell in him, because he hath given us of his [loving] Spirit," chap. iv. 13. And, "Hereby we know that he abideth in us by the [obedient] Spirit which he hath given us," chap. iii. 24.

4. It is highly probable, there never were any children of God, from the beginning of the world unto this day, who were farther advanced in the grace of God, and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, than the Apostle John, at the time when he wrote these words, and the *Fathers in Christ*, to whom he wrote. Notwithstanding which, it is evident, both the Apostle himself and all those pillars in God's temple, were very far from despising these marks of their being the children of God; and that they applied them to their own souls for the confirmation of their faith. Yet all this is no other than rational evidence, the "witness of our spirit," our reason or understanding. It all resolves into this: those who have these marks, are children of God. But we have these marks; therefore we are children of God.

5. But how does it appear, that we have these marks? This is a question which still remains. How does it appear, that we do love God and our neighbour? And that we keep his commandments? Observe, that the meaning of the question is, How does it appear to *ourselves?* (not to *others.*) I would ask him then that proposes this question, How does it appear to you, that you are alive? And that you are now in ease, and not in pain? Are you not immediately conscious of it? By the same immediate consciousness you will know, if your soul is alive to God: if you are saved from the pain of proud wrath, and have the ease of a meek and quiet spirit. By the same means you cannot but perceive, if you love, rejoice, and delight in God. By the same, you must be directly assured, if you love your neighbour as yourself; if you are kindly affectioned to all mankind, and full of gentleness and long-suffering. And with regard to the

outward mark of the children of God, which is, according to St. John, the keeping his commandments, you undoubtedly know in your own breast, if, by the grace of God, it belongs to you. Your conscience informs you, from day to day, if you do not take the name of God within your lips, unless with seriousness and devotion, with reverence and godly fear: if you remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy: if you honour your father and mother; if you do to all as you would they should do unto you: if you possess your body in sanctification and honour: and if whether you eat or drink, you are temperate therein, and do all to the glory of God.

6. Now this is properly the "testimony of our own spirit:" even the testimony of our own conscience, that God hath given us to be holy of heart, and holy in outward conversation. It is a consciousness of our having received, in and by the Spirit of Adoption, the tempers mentioned in the word of God, as belonging to his adopted children: even, a loving heart toward God, and toward all mankind, hanging, with child-like confidence, on God our Father, desiring nothing but him, casting all our care upon him, and embracing every child of man, with earnest, tender affection; so as to be ready to lay down our life for our brother, as Christ laid down his life for us: a consciousness, that we are inwardly conformed, by the Spirit of God, to the image of his Son, and that we walk before him in justice, mercy, and truth, doing the things which are pleasing in his sight.

7. But what is that Testimony of God's Spirit, which is super-added to and conjoined with this? How does he "bear witness with our spirit that we are the children of God?" It is hard to find words in the language of men, to explain "the deep things of God." Indeed, there are none that will adequately express, what the children of God experience. But perhaps one might say, (desiring any who are taught of God, to correct, to soften, or strengthen the expression,) The testimony of the Spirit, is an inward impression on the soul, whereby the Spirit of God directly

"witnesses to my spirit, that I am a child of God;" that Jesus Christ hath loved me, and given himself for me: and that all my sins are blotted out, and I, even I, am reconciled to God.

8. That this "Testimony of the Spirit of God" must needs, in the very nature of things, be antecedent to the "Testimony of our own spirit," may appear from this single consideration. We must be holy of heart, and holy in life, before we can be conscious that we are so; before we can have "the testimony of our spirit," that we are inwardly and outwardly holy. But we must love God, before we can be holy at all; this being the root of all holiness. Now we cannot love God, till we know he loves us. "We love him, because he first loved us." And we cannot know his pardoning love to us, till his Spirit witnesses it to our spirit. Since therefore this "testimony of his Spirit" must precede the love of God and all holiness, of consequence it must precede our inward consciousness thereof, or, the "testimony of our spirit" concerning them.

9. Then, and not till then, when the Spirit of God beareth that witness to our spirit, "God hath loved thee, and given his own Son to be the propitiation for thy sins; the Son of God hath loved thee, and hath washed thee from thy sins in his blood:" "We love God, because he first loved us," and for his sake we *love our brother also*. And of this we cannot but be conscious to ourselves: we "know the things that are freely given to us of God." We know that we love God and keep his commandments. And "hereby also we know that we are of God." This is that testimony of our own spirit; which, so long as we continue to love God and keep his commandments, continues joined with the testimony of God's Spirit, "that we are the children of God."

10. Not that I would, by any means, be understood, by any thing which has been spoken concerning it, to exclude the operation of the Spirit of God, even from the "testimony of our own spirit." In no wise. It is he that not only worketh in us every manner of thing that is good, but also shines upon his own work, and clearly shews what he has

wrought. Accordingly, this is spoken of by St. Paul, as one great end of our receiving the Spirit, "That we may know the things which are freely given to us of God:" that he may strengthen the testimony of our conscience, touching our "simplicity and godly sincerity," and give us to discern in a fuller and stronger light, that we now do the things which please him.

11. Should it still be inquired, How does the Spirit of God "bear witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God," so as to exclude all doubt, and evidence the reality of our sonship? The answer is clear, from what has been observed above. And first, as to the witness of our spirit. The soul as intimately and evidently perceives, when it loves, delights, and rejoices in God, as when it loves and delights in any thing on earth. And it can no more doubt, whether it loves, delights, and rejoices, or not, than whether it exists, or not. If therefore this be just reasoning,

He that now loves God, that delights and rejoices in him, with a humble joy, a holy delight, and an obedient love, is a child of God:

But I thus love, delight, and rejoice in God;

Therefore, I am a child of God:

Then a Christian can, in no wise, doubt, of his being a child of God. Of the former proposition, he has as full an assurance as he has that the Scriptures are of God. And of his thus loving God, he has an inward proof, which is nothing short of self-evidence. Thus, "the testimony of our own spirit," is with the most intimate conviction manifested to our hearts, in such a manner, as beyond all reasonable doubt, to evince the reality of our sonship.

12. The *manner* how the divine testimony is manifested to the heart, I do not take upon me to explain. Such knowledge is too wonderful and excellent for me: I cannot attain unto it. The wind bloweth: and I hear the sound thereof. But I cannot tell "how it cometh, or whither it goeth." As no one knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of a man that is in him: so the *manner* of the things of God knoweth

no one, save the Spirit of God. But the fact we know: namely, that the Spirit of God does give a believer such a testimony of his adoption, that while it is present to the soul, he can no more doubt the reality of his sonship, than he can doubt of the shining of the sun, while he stands in the full blaze of his beams.

II. 1. How this joint testimony of God's Spirit and our spirit may be clearly and solidly distinguished, from the presumption of a natural man, and from the delusion of the devil, is the next thing to be considered. And it highly imports all who desire the salvation of God, to consider it with the deepest attention, as they would not deceive their own souls. An error in this is generally observed to have the most fatal consequences: the rather, because he that errs, seldom discovers his mistake, till it is too late to remedy it.

2. And first, how is this testimony to be distinguished from the presumption of a natural man? It is certain, one who was never convinced of sin, is always ready to flatter himself, and to think of himself, especially in spiritual things, more highly than he ought to think. And hence, it is in no wise strange, if one, who is vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, when he hears of this privilege of true Christians, among whom he undoubtedly ranks himself, should soon work himself up into a persuasion, that he is already possessed thereof. Such instances now abound in the world, and have abounded in all ages. How then may the real testimony of the Spirit with our spirit, be distinguished from this damning presumption?

3. I answer, the holy Scriptures abound with marks, whereby the one may be distinguished from the other. They describe, in the plainest manner, the circumstances which go before, which accompany, and which follow, the true, genuine testimony of the Spirit of God, with the spirit of a believer. Whoever carefully weighs and attends to these will not need to put darkness for light. He will perceive so wide a difference with respect to all these, between the real and the pretended witness of the Spirit, that there will

be no danger, I might say, no possibility, of confounding the one with the other.

4. By these, one who vainly presumes on the gift of God, might surely know, if he really desired it, that he hath been hitherto "given up to a strong delusion," and suffered to *believe* a lie. For the Scriptures lay down those clear, obvious marks, as preceding, accompanying, and following that gift, which a little reflection would convince him, beyond all doubt, were never found in his soul. For instance, the Scripture describes Repentance, or conviction of sin, as constantly going before this witness of Pardon. So, "Repent; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," Matt. iii. 2. "Repent ye, and believe the gospel," Mark i. 15. "Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, for the remission of sins," Acts ii. 38. "Repent ye therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out," iii. 19. In conformity whereto, our Church also continually places Repentance before Pardon, or the witness of it. "He pardoneth and absolveth all them that truly repent, and unfeignedly believe his holy gospel." "Almighty God—hath promised forgiveness of sins to all them, who, with hearty repentance and true faith, return unto him." But he is a stranger even to this repentance. He hath never known "a broken and a contrite heart. The remembrance of his sins was never grievous unto him, nor the burthen of them intolerable." In repeating those words, he never meant what he said; he merely paid a compliment to God. And were it only from the want of this previous work of God, he hath too great reason to believe, that he hath grasped a mere shadow, and never yet known the real privilege of the sons of God.

5. Again, the Scriptures describe the being born of God, which must precede the witness that we are his children, as a vast and mighty change; a change "from darkness to light," as well as "from the power of Satan unto God:" as a "passing from death unto life," a resurrection from the dead. Thus the Apostle to the Ephesians; "You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins," ii. 1.

And again, "When we were dead in sins, he hath quickened us together with Christ; and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus," 5, 6. But what knoweth he, concerning whom we now speak, of any such change as this? He is altogether unacquainted with this whole matter. This is a language which he does not understand. He tells you, "He always was a Christian. He knows no time when he had need of such a change." By this also, if he give himself leave to think, may he know, that he is not born of the Spirit: that he has never yet known God; but has mistaken the voice of Nature for the voice of God.

6. But waving the consideration of whatever he has or has not experienced in time past; by the present marks we may easily distinguish a child of God, from a presumptuous self-deceiver. The Scriptures describe that joy in the Lord, which accompanies the witness of his Spirit, as a humble joy, a joy that abases to the dust; that makes a pardoned sinner cry out, "I am vile! What am I, or my father's house? Now mine eye seeth thee, I abhor myself in dust and ashes!" And wherever lowliness is, there is meekness, patience, gentleness, long-suffering. There is a soft, yielding spirit; a mildness and sweetness; a tenderness of soul which words cannot express. But do these fruits attend that *supposed* testimony of the Spirit, in a presumptuous man? Just the reverse. The more confident he is of the favour of God, the more he is lifted up; the more does he exalt himself; the more haughty and assuming is his whole behaviour. The stronger witness he imagines himself to have, the more overbearing is he to all around him; the more incapable of receiving any reproof, the more impatient of contradiction. Instead of being more meek, and gentle, and teachable, more *swift to hear, and slow to speak*, he is more slow to hear, and swift to speak, more unready to learn of any one; more fiery and vehement in his temper, and eager in his conversation. Yea, perhaps, there will sometimes appear a kind of fierceness in his air, his manner of speaking, his whole deportment, as if he were just going to take the

matter out of God's hands, and himself to "devour the adversaries."

7. Once more. The Scriptures teach, "this is the love of God," the sure mark thereof, "that we keep his commandments," 1 John v. 3. And our Lord himself saith, "he that keepeth my commandments, he it is that loveth me," John xiv. 21. Love rejoices to obey; to do in every point, whatever is acceptable to the Beloved. A true lover of God hastens to do his Will on earth as it is done in heaven. But is this the character of the presumptuous pretender to the love of God? Nay, but his love gives him a liberty to disobey, to break, not keep, the commandments of God. Perhaps, when he was in fear of the wrath of God, he did labour to do his will. But now looking on himself as "not under the Law," he thinks he is no longer obliged to observe it. He is therefore less zealous of good works, less careful to abstain from evil; less watchful over his own heart; less jealous over his tongue. He is less earnest to deny himself, and to take up his cross daily. In a word, the whole form of his life is changed, since he has fancied himself to be at *liberty*. He is no longer "exercising himself unto godliness; wrestling not only with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers, enduring hardships, agonizing to enter in at the strait gate." No; he has found an easier way to heaven; a broad, smooth, flowery path; in which he can say to his soul, "Soul, take thy ease; eat, drink, and be merry." It follows with undeniable evidence, that he has not the true testimony of his own spirit. He cannot be conscious of having those marks which he hath not; that lowliness, meekness, and obedience. Nor yet can the Spirit of the God of Truth bear witness to a lie; or testify that he is a child of God, when he is manifestly a child of the devil.

8. Discover thyself, thou poor self-deceiver! Thou who art confident of being a child of God, thou who sayest, "I have the witness in myself," and therefore defiest all thy enemies. Thou art weighed in the balance and found wanting; even in the Balance of the Sanctuary. The Word of

the Lord hath tried thy soul, and proved thee to be reprobate silver. Thou art not lowly of heart: therefore thou hast not received the Spirit of Jesus unto this day. Thou art not gentle and meek; therefore thy joy is nothing worth; it is not joy in the Lord. Thou dost not keep his commandments; therefore thou lovest him not, neither art thou partaker of the Holy Ghost. It is consequently, as certain and as evident, as the Oracles of God can make it, his Spirit doth not bear witness with thy spirit, that thou art a child of God. O cry unto him that the scales may fall off thine eyes, that thou mayest know thyself as thou art known; that thou mayest receive the sentence of death in thyself, till thou hear the voice that raises the dead, saying, "Be of good cheer: thy sins are forgiven; thy faith hath made thee whole."

9. "But how may one who has the real witness in himself distinguish it from presumption?" How, I pray, do you distinguish day from night? How do you distinguish light from darkness? Or, the light of a star, or a glimmering taper, from the light of the noon-day sun? Is there not an inherent, obvious, essential difference between the one and the other? And do you not immediately and directly perceive that difference, provided your senses are rightly disposed? In like manner, there is an inherent, essential difference, between spiritual light, and spiritual darkness: and between the light wherewith the Sun of Righteousness shines upon our heart, and that glimmering light, which arises only from "sparks of our own kindling." And this difference also is immediately and directly perceived, if our spiritual senses are rightly disposed.

10. To require a more minute and philosophical account of the manner whereby we distinguish these, and of the *Criteria*, or intrinsic marks, whereby we know the voice of God, is to make a demand which can never be answered; no, not by one who has the deepest knowledge of God. Suppose, when Paul answered before Agrippa, the wise Roman had said, "Thou talkest of hearing the voice of the Son of God. How dost thou know, it was his voice? By

what *Criteria*, what intrinsic marks, dost thou know the voice of God? Explain to me, the *manner* of distinguishing this, from a human or angelic voice?" Can you believe, the Apostle himself would have once attempted to answer so idle a demand? And yet, doubtless, the moment he heard that voice, he knew it was the voice of God. But *how* he knew this, who is able to explain? Perhaps, neither man nor angel.

11. To come yet closer. Suppose God were now to speak to any soul, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." He must be willing that soul should know his voice; otherwise he would speak in vain. And he is able to effect this; for, whenever he wills, to do is present with him. And he does effect it. That soul is absolutely assured, "This voice is the voice of God." But yet he who hath that witness in himself, cannot explain it to one who hath it not: nor indeed is it to be expected that he should. Were there any natural medium to prove, or natural method to explain the things of God, to unexperienced men; then the natural man might discern and know the things of the Spirit of God. But this is utterly contrary to the assertion of the Apostle, that "he cannot know them, because they are spiritually discerned;" even by spiritual senses, which the natural man hath not.

12. "But how shall I know that my spiritual senses are rightly disposed?" This also is a question of vast importance. For, if a man mistake in this, he may run on in endless error and delusion. "And how am I assured, that this is not my case: and that I do not mistake the voice of the Spirit?" Even by the "testimony of your own spirit;" by "the answer of a good conscience toward God." By the fruits which he hath wrought in your spirit, you shall know the "testimony of the Spirit of God." Hereby you shall know, that you are in no delusion, that you have not deceived your own soul. The immediate fruits of the Spirit, ruling in the heart, are "love, joy, peace; bowels of mercies, humbleness of mind, meekness, gentleness, long-suffering." And the outward fruits are, The doing good to all men; the doing no evil to any; and the walking in the

light; a zealous, uniform obedience to all the commandments of God.

13. By the same fruits shall you distinguish this voice of God, from any delusion of the devil. That proud spirit cannot humble thee before God. He neither can nor would soften thy heart, and melt it first into earnest mourning after God, and then into filial love. It is not the adversary of God and man, that enables thee to love thy neighbour; or to put on meekness, gentleness, patience, temperance, and the whole armour of God. He is not divided against himself, or a destroyer of sin, his own work. No; it is none but the Son of God who cometh "to destroy the works of the devil." As surely therefore as holiness is of God, and as sin is the work of the devil, so surely the witness thou hast in thyself is not of Satan, but of God.

14. Well then mayest thou say, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift! Thanks be unto God, who giveth me to *know in whom I have believed:* who 'hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into my heart, crying, Abba, Father,' and even now *bearing witness with my spirit, that I am a child of God!*" And see, that not only thy lips, but thy life shew forth his praise. He hath marked thee for his own; *glorify him* then *in thy body and thy spirit which are* his. Beloved, if thou *hast this hope in* thyself, *purify* thyself *as he is pure.* While thou beholdest *what manner of love the Father hath given* thee, that thou shouldst *be called a child of God; cleanse* thyself "from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God:" and let all thy thoughts, words, and works be a spiritual sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God through Christ Jesus!

SERMON XI.

THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT.

DISCOURSE II.

ROMANS viii. 16.

"*The Spirit itself beareth witness with our Spirit, that we are the Children of God.*"

1. NONE who believe the Scriptures to be the Word of God, can doubt the *importance* of such a truth as this: a truth revealed therein, not once only, not obscurely, not incidentally, but frequently, and that in express terms; but solemnly and of set purpose, as denoting one of the peculiar privileges of the children of God.

2. And it is the more necessary to explain and defend this truth, because there is a danger on the right hand and on the left. If we deny it, there is a danger lest our religion degenerate into mere formality: lest, "having a form of godliness," we neglect, if not "deny the power of it." If we allow it, but do not understand what we allow, we are liable to run into all the wildness of enthusiasm. It is therefore needful, in the highest degree, to guard those who fear God from both these dangers, by a scriptural and rational illustration and confirmation of this momentous truth.

3. It may seem, something of this kind is the more needful, because so little has been written on the subject with any clearness: unless some discourses on the wrong side of the question, which explain it quite away. And it cannot be

doubted, but these were occasioned, at least, in a great measure, by the crude, unscriptural, irrational explication of others, who "knew not what they spake, nor whereof they affirmed."

4. It more nearly concerns the Methodists, so called, clearly to understand, explain, and defend this doctrine, because it is one grand part of the Testimony, which God has given them to bear to all mankind. It is by his peculiar blessing upon them in searching the Scriptures, confirmed by the experience of his children, that this great evangelical truth has been recovered, which had been for many years well nigh lost and forgotten.

II. 1. But what is *the Witness of the Spirit?* The original word μαρτυρια, may be rendered either, (as it is in several places,) *the witness*, or less ambiguously, *the testimony*, or *the record:* so it is rendered in our translation, 1 John v. 11, "This is the record, [the testimony, the sum of what God testifies in all the inspired writings], that God hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." The testimony now under consideration is given by the Spirit of God to and with our spirit. He is the Person testifying. What he testifies to us, is, "that we are the children of God." The immediate result of this testimony, is "the fruit of the Spirit;" namely, "love, joy, peace; long-suffering, gentleness, goodness." And, without these, the testimony itself cannot continue. For, it is inevitably destroyed, not only by the commission of any outward sin, or the omission of known duty, but by giving way to any inward sin: in a word, by whatever grieves the Holy Spirit of God.

2. I observed many years ago, "It is hard to find words in the language of men, to explain the deep things of God. Indeed there are none that will adequately express what the Spirit of God works in his children. But, perhaps, one might say, (desiring any who are taught of God, to correct, soften, or strengthen the expression:) By 'the Testimony of the Spirit,' I mean, an inward impression on the soul, whereby the Spirit of God immediately and directly witnesses to my spirit, that I am a child of God, that "Jesus

Christ hath loved me, and given himself for me." That all my sins are blotted out, and I, even I, am reconciled to God.

3. After twenty years further consideration, I see no cause to retract any part of this. Neither do I conceive, how any of these expressions may be altered, so as to make them more intelligible. I can only add, that if any of the children of God will point out any other expressions, which are more clear, or more agreeable to the Word of God, I will readily lay these aside.

4. Meantime let it be observed, I do not mean hereby, that the Spirit of God testifies this by any outward voice: no, nor always by an inward voice, altho' he may do this sometimes. Neither do I suppose, that he always applies to the heart, (tho' he often may) one or more texts of Scripture. But he so works upon the soul by his immediate influence, and by a strong, tho' inexplicable operation, that the stormy wind and troubled waves subside, and there is a sweet calm: the heart resting as in the arms of Jesus, and the sinner being clearly satisfied, that God is reconciled, that all his "iniquities are forgiven, and his sins covered."

5. Now what is the matter of dispute concerning this? Not, whether there be a witness or testimony of the Spirit? Not, whether the Spirit does testify with our spirit, that we are the children of God? None can deny this, without flatly contradicting the Scriptures, and charging a lie upon the God of truth. Therefore that there is a testimony of the Spirit, is acknowledged by all parties.

6. Neither is it questioned, whether there is an *indirect* witness or testimony, that we are the children of God. This is nearly, if not exactly the same with "the testimony of a good conscience towards God;" and is the result of reason, or reflection on what we feel in our own souls. Strictly speaking, it is a conclusion drawn partly from the word of God, and partly from our own experience. The Word of God says, every one who has the fruit of the Spirit is a child of God. Experience or inward consciousness tell me, that I have the fruit of the Spirit. And hence I rationally

conclude, therefore I am a child of God. This is likewise allowed on all hands, and so is no matter of controversy.

7. Nor do we assert, that there can be any real testimony of the Spirit, without the fruit of the Spirit. We assert, on the contrary, that the fruit of the Spirit immediately springs from this testimony: not always indeed in the same degree, even when the testimony is first given. And much less afterwards: neither joy nor peace is always at one stay. No, nor love: as neither is the testimony itself always equally strong and clear.

8. But the point in question is, whether there be any *direct testimony* of the Spirit at all? Whether there be any other testimony of the Spirit, than that which arises from a consciousness of the fruit.

III. 1. I believe there is, because that is the plain, natural meaning of the text, "the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." It is manifest, here are two witnesses mentioned, who together testify the same thing, the Spirit of God, and our own spirit. The late Bishop of London in his sermon on this text, seems astonished that any one can doubt of this, which appears upon the very face of the words. Now, "*The testimony of our own spirit*, (says the Bishop,) is one, which is the consciousness of our own sincerity;" or to express the same thing a little more clearly, the consciousness of the fruit of the Spirit. When our Spirit is conscious of this, of love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, it easily infers from these premises, that we are the children of God.

2. It is true, that great man supposes the other witness to be "The consciousness of our own good works." This, he affirms, is "the testimony of God's Spirit." But this is included in the testimony of our own spirit: Yea, and in sincerity, even according to the common sense of the word. So the Apostle, "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity we have our conversation in the world:" where it is plain, sincerity refers to our words and actions, at least as much as to our

inward dispositions. So that this is not another witness, but the very same that he mentioned before: the consciousness of our good works being only one branch of the consciousness of our sincerity. Consequently here is only one witness still. If therefore the text speaks of two witnesses, one of these is not the consciousness of our good works, neither of our sincerity: all this being manifestly contained in "the testimony of our Spirit."

3. What then is the other witness? This might easily be learned, if the text itself were not sufficiently clear, from the verse immediately preceding. "Ye have received, not the Spirit of bondage, but the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, "Abba, Father." It follows, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."

4. This is farther explained by the parallel text, Gal. iv. 6, "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father." Is not this something *immediate* and *direct*, not the result of reflection or argumentation? Does not this Spirit cry "Abba, Father," *in our hearts*, the moment it is given? Antecedently to any reflection upon our sincerity, yea, to any reasoning whatsoever? And is not this the plain, natural sense of the words, which strikes any one, as soon as he hears them? All these texts then, in their most obvious meaning, describe a direct testimony of the Spirit.

5. That *the testimony of the Spirit of God*, must in the very nature of things, be antecedent to *the testimony of our own spirit*, may appear from this single consideration. We must be holy in heart and life, before we can be conscious that we are so. But we must love God before we can be holy at all, this being the root of all holiness. Now we cannot love God, 'till we know he loves us; "we love him because he first loved us." And we cannot know his love to us, 'till his Spirit witnesses it to our spirit. 'Till then we cannot believe it: we cannot say, "the life which I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

Then, only then we feel
Our interest in his blood,
And cry with joy unspeakable,
Thou art my Lord, my God.

Since therefore the testimony of his Spirit must precede the love of God and all holiness, of consequence it must precede our consciousness thereof.

6. And here properly comes in, to confirm this scriptural doctrine, the experience of the children of God: the experience not of two or three, not of a few, but of a great multitude which no man can number. It has been confirmed, both in this and in all ages by *a cloud of* living and dying *witnesses*. It is confirmed by your experience and *mine*. The Spirit itself bore witness to my spirit, that I was a child of God, gave me an *evidence* hereof, and I immediately cried, *Abba, Father!* And this I did, (and so did you) before I reflected on, or was conscious of any fruit of the Spirit. It was from this testimony received, that love, joy, peace, and the whole fruit of the Spirit flowed. First I heard,

Thy sins are forgiven! Accepted thou art!
I listen'd, and heaven Sprung up in my heart.

7. But this is confirmed, not only by the experience of the children of God, thousands of whom can declare, that they never did know themselves to be in the favour of God, 'till it was directly witnessed to them by his Spirit: but by all those who are convinced of sin, who feel the wrath of God abiding on them. These cannot be satisfied with any thing less than a direct testimony from his Spirit, that he is "merciful to their unrighteousness, and remembers their sins and iniquities no more." Tell any of these, "You are to know you are a child of God, by reflecting on what he has wrought in you, on your love, joy, and peace:" and will he not immediately reply, "By all this I know, I am a child of the devil. I have no more love to God than the devil has: my carnal mind is enmity against God. I have

no joy in the Holy Ghost: my soul is sorrowful even unto death. I have no peace: my heart is a troubled sea: I am all storm and tempest." And which way can these souls possibly be comforted, but by a divine testimony, (not that they are good, or sincere, or conformable to the Scripture in heart and life, but) that God *justifieth the ungodly*: him that till the moment he is justified, is all ungodly, void of all true holiness? "Him that worketh not," that worketh nothing that is truly good, 'till he is conscious that he is accepted, "not for (any) works of righteousness which he hath done," but by the mere, free mercy of God? Wholly and solely, for what the Son of God hath done and suffered for him? And can it be any otherwise, if "a man is justified by faith, without the works of the law?" If so, what inward or outward goodness can he be conscious of antecedent to his justification? Nay, is not the "having nothing to pay," that is, the being conscious that "there dwelleth in us no good thing," neither inward nor outward goodness, essentially, indispensably necessary, before we can be "justified freely, thro' the redemption that is in Jesus Christ?" Was ever any man justified since his coming into the world, or can any man ever be justified, 'till he is brought to that point,

"I give up every plea beside,
Lord, I am damn'd—But thou hast died!"

8. Every one therefore who denies the existence of such a testimony, does in effect deny justification by faith. It follows, that either he never experienced this, either he never was justified, or that he has forgotten, as St. Peter speaks, *τῦ καθαρισμῦ τῶν πάλαι ἁμαρτιῶν*, *the purification from his former sins*, the experience he then had himself, the manner wherein God wrought in his own soul, when his former sins were blotted out.

9. And the experience even of the children of the world, here confirms that of the children of God. Many of these have a desire to please God: some of them take much pains to please him. But do they not, one and all, count it the

highest absurdity, for any to talk of "*knowing* his sins are forgiven?" Which of *them* even pretends to any such thing? And yet many of them are conscious of their own sincerity. Many of them undoubtedly have, in a degree, the testimony of their own spirit, a consciousness of their uprightness. But this brings them no consciousness, that they are forgiven, no knowledge that they are the children of God. Yea, the more sincere they are, the more uneasy they generally are, for want of knowing it: plainly shewing that this cannot be known, in a satisfactory manner, by the bare testimony of our own spirit, without God's directly testifying, that we are his children.

IV. But abundance of objections have been made to this: the chief of which it may be well to consider.

1. It is objected first, "Experience is not sufficient to prove a doctrine which is not founded on Scripture." This is undoubtedly true; and it is an important truth; but it does not affect the present question. For it has been shewn, that this doctrine is founded on Scripture. Therefore experience is properly alleged to confirm it.

2. "But madmen, French prophets, and enthusiasts of every kind, have imagined they experienced this witness." They have so. And perhaps not a few of them did, although they did not retain it long. But if they did not, this is no proof at all that others have not experienced it: as a madman's imagining himself a king, does not prove that there are no *real* kings.

"Nay, many who pleaded strongly for this, have utterly decried the Bible." Perhaps so; but this was no necessary consequence: thousands plead for it who have the highest esteem for the Bible.

"Yea, but many have fatally deceived themselves hereby, and got above all conviction."

And yet a scriptural doctrine is no worse, tho' men abuse it to their own destruction.

3. "But I lay it down as an undoubted truth, the fruit of the Spirit is the witness of the Spirit." Not undoubted;

thousands doubt of, yea, flatly deny it: but to let that pass. "If this witness be sufficient, there is no need of any other. But it is sufficient, unless in one of these cases, 1, The *total absence* of the fruit of the Spirit." And this is the case, when the direct witness is first given: 2, "The *not perceiving it.* But to contend for it in this case, is to contend for being in the favour of God, and not knowing it." True, not knowing it at that time any otherwise, than by the testimony which is given for that end. And this we do contend for: we contend that the direct witness may shine clear, even while the indirect one is under a cloud.

4. It is objected, secondly, "The design of the witness contended for, is to prove that the profession we make is genuine. But it does not prove this." I answer, the proving this, is not the design of it. It is antecedent to our making any profession at all, but that of being lost, undone, guilty, helpless sinners. It is designed to assure those to whom it is given, that they are the children of God: that they are "justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ." And this does not suppose, that their preceding thoughts, words, and actions, are conformable to the rule of Scripture. It supposes quite the reverse, namely, That they are sinners all over, sinners both in heart and life. Were it otherwise, God would *justify the godly;* and *their own works*, would be *counted to them for righteousness.* And I cannot but fear that a supposition of our being justified by works, is at the root of all their objections. For, whoever cordially believes, that God *imputes* to all that are justified, *righteousness without works*, will find no difficulty in allowing the witness of his Spirit, preceding the fruit of it.

5. It is objected, thirdly, "One Evangelist says, 'your heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.' The other Evangelist calls the same thing *good gifts;* abundantly demonstrating that the Spirit's way of bearing witness is by giving good gifts." Nay, here is nothing at all about *bearing witness*, either in the one text or

the other. Therefore, till this demonstration is better demonstrated, I let it stand as it is.

6. It is objected, fourthly, "The Scripture says, 'the tree is known by its fruits. Prove all things. Try the spirits. Examine yourselves.'" Most true: therefore, let every man who believes he "hath the witness in himself," try whether it be of God; if the fruit follow, it is; otherwise, it is not. For, certainly "the tree is known by its fruit:" Hereby we *prove*, if it be of God. "But the direct witness is never referred to, in the book of God." Not as standing alone, not as a single witness, but as connected with the other: as giving a *joint testimony*, testifying *with our spirit*, that we are children of God. And who is able to prove, that it is not *thus* referred to in this very scripture, "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith: prove your ownselves. Know ye not yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?" It is by no means clear, that they did not know this, by a *direct* as well as a *remote* witness. How is it proved, that they did not know it, first, by an inward consciousness, and then by love, joy, and peace?

7. "But the testimony arising from the internal and external change, is constantly referred to in the Bible." It is so. And we constantly refer thereto, to confirm the testimony of the Spirit.

"Nay, all the marks *you* have given, whereby to distinguish the operations of God's Spirit from delusion, refer to the change wrought in us and upon us." This likewise is undoubtedly true.

8. It is objected, fifthly, that "The direct witness of the Spirit does not secure us from the greatest delusion. And is that a witness fit to be trusted, whose testimony cannot be depended on? That is forced to flee to something else, to prove what it asserts?" I answer. To secure us from all delusion, God gives us two witnesses that we are his children. And this they testify conjointly. Therefore, "what God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." And while they are joined, we cannot be deluded: their testimony

be depended on. They are fit to be trusted in the est degree, and need nothing else to prove what they t.

Nay, the direct witness only asserts, but does not prove thing." By two witnesses shall every word be estab- ed. And when the Spirit "witnesses with our spirit," God designs it to do, then it fully proves that we are chil- n of God.

9. It is objected, sixthly, "You own the change wrought sufficient testimony, unless in the case of severe trials, ch as that of our Saviour upon the cross. But none of us n be tried in that manner." But you or I may be tried in ch a manner, and so may any other child of God, that it ll be impossible for us to keep our filial confidence in God, ithout the direct witness of his Spirit.

10. It is objected, lastly, "The greatest contenders for it, re some of the proudest and most uncharitable of men." Perhaps some of the *hottest* contenders for it are both proud nd uncharitable. But many of the *firmest* contenders for it, are eminently meek and lowly in heart: and, indeed, in all other respects also,

"True followers of their lamb-like Lord."

The preceding objections are the most considerable that I have heard, and, I believe, contain the strength of the cause. Yet I apprehend whoever calmly and impartially considers those objections and the answers together, will easily see, that they do not destroy, no, nor weaken the evidence of that great truth, that the Spirit of God does *directly*, as well as *indirectly* testify, that we are children of God.

V. 1. The sum of all is this. The testimony of the Spirit is an inward impression on the souls of believers, whereby the Spirit of God directly testifies to their spirit, that they are children of God. And it is not questioned, whether there is a testimony of the Spirit? But whether there is any *direct testimony?* Whether there is any other than that which arises from a consciousness of the fruit of the Spirit? We

believe there is: because this is the plain natural meaning of the text, illustrated both by the preceding words, and by the parallel passage in the epistle to the Galatians: because, in the nature of the thing, the testimony must precede the fruit which springs from it, and because this plain meaning of the word of God is confirmed by the experience of innumerable children of God: yea, and by the experience of all who are convinced of sin, who can never rest, till they have a direct witness: and even of the children of the world, who not having the witness in themselves, one and all declare, none can *know* his sins forgiven.

2. And whereas it is objected, that experience is not sufficient to prove a doctrine unsupported by Scripture: that madmen and enthusiasts of every kind, have imagined such a witness; that the design of that witness is to prove our profession genuine, which design it does not answer: that the Scripture says, "The tree is known by its fruit; examine yourselves; prove your ownselves;" and mean time the direct witness is never referred to in all the book of God: that it does not secure us from the greatest delusions: And, lastly, that the change wrought in us is a sufficient testimony, unless in such trials as Christ alone suffered. We answer, 1, Experience is sufficient to *confirm* a doctrine, which is grounded on Scripture: 2, Though many fancy they experience what they do not, this is no prejudice to real experience: 3, The design of that witness is, to assure us we are children of God: and this design it does answer: 4, The true witness of the Spirit is known by its fruit, love, peace, joy; not indeed preceding, but following it: 5, It cannot be proved, that the direct, as well as the indirect witness, is not referred to in that very text, "Know ye not your ownselves that Jesus Christ is in you?" 6, The Spirit of God "witnessing with our spirit" does secure us from all delusion: And, lastly, we are all liable to trials, wherein the testimony of our own spirit is not sufficient; wherein nothing less than the direct testimony of God's Spirit can assure us that we are his children.

3. Two inferences may be drawn from the whole. The first, let none ever presume to rest, in any supposed testimony of the Spirit, which is separate from the fruit of it. If the Spirit of God does really testify that we are children of God, the immediate consequence will be the fruit of the Spirit, even, "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, temperance." And, however, this fruit may be clouded for a while, during the time of strong temptation, so that it does not appear to the tempted person, while Satan is "sifting him as wheat," yet the substantial part of it remains, even under the thickest cloud. It is true, joy in the Holy Ghost may be withdrawn, during the hour of trial; yea, the soul may be "exceeding sorrowful," while "the hour and power of darkness" continue. But even this is generally restored with increase, till we rejoice "with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

4. The second inference is, let none rest in any supposed fruit of the Spirit without the witness. There may be foretastes of joy, of peace, of love, and those not delusive, but really from God, long before we have the witness in ourselves, before the Spirit of God witnesses with our spirits that we have "redemption in the blood of Jesus, even the forgiveness of sins." Yea, there may be a degree of long-suffering, of gentleness, of fidelity, meekness, temperance, (not a shadow thereof, but a real degree, by the preventing grace of God), before we are "accepted in the Beloved;" and, consequently, before we have a testimony of our acceptance. But it is by no means advisable to rest here; it is at the peril of our souls if we do. If we are wise, we shall be continually crying to God, until his Spirit cry in our heart, *Abba, Father!* This is the privilege of all the children of God, and without this we can never be assured that we are his children. Without this we cannot retain a steady peace, nor avoid perplexing doubts and fears. But when we have once received this *Spirit of Adoption*, this *peace which passes all understanding*, and which expels all painful doubt and fear, will "keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." And when this has brought forth its genuine fruit,

all inward and outward holiness, it is undoubtedly the will of him that calleth us, always to give us what he has once given. So that there is no need that we should ever more be deprived, of either the testimony of God's Spirit, or the testimony of our own, the consciousness of our walking in all righteousness and true holiness.

Newry, April 4, 1767.

SERMON XII.

THE WITNESS OF OUR OWN SPIRIT.

2 CORINTHIANS i. 12.

"*This is our Rejoicing, the Testimony of our Conscience, that in Simplicity and godly Sincerity, not with fleshly Wisdom, but by the Grace of* GOD, *we have had our Conversation in the World.*"

1. SUCH is the voice of every true believer in Christ, so long as he abides in faith and love. "He that followeth me, saith our Lord, walketh not in darkness:" and while he hath the light, he rejoiceth therein. "As he hath received the Lord Jesus Christ, so he walketh in him." And while he walketh in him, the exhortation of the Apostle takes place in his soul, day by day, "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again, I say, rejoice."

2. But that we may not build our house upon the sand, (lest when the rains descend, and the winds blow, and the floods arise and beat upon it, it fall, and great be the fall thereof), I intend, in the following discourse, to shew, What is the nature and ground of a Christian's Joy. We know, in general, it is that happy peace, that calm satisfaction of spirit, which arises from such a testimony of his conscience, as is here described by the Apostle. But, in order to understand this the more thoroughly, it will be requisite to weigh all his words: whence will easily appear,

both what we are to understand by *Conscience*, and what, by the *Testimony* thereof; and also, how he that hath this testimony rejoiceth evermore.

3. And, first, What are we to understand by *Conscience?* What is the meaning of this word that is in every one's mouth? One would imagine, it was an exceedingly difficult thing to discover this, when we consider how large and numerous volumes have been from time to time written on this subject: and how all the treasures of ancient and modern learning have been ransacked, in order to explain it. And yet it is to be feared, it has not received much light from all these elaborate inquiries. Rather, have not most of those writers puzzled the cause; "darkening counsel by words without knowledge;" perplexing a subject, plain in itself, and easy to be understood? For, set aside but hard words, and every man of an honest heart will soon understand the thing.

4. God has made us thinking beings, capable of perceiving what is present, and of reflecting or looking back on what is past. In particular, we are capable of perceiving whatsoever passes in our own hearts or lives; of knowing whatsoever we feel or do; and that either while it passes, or when it is past. This we mean when we say, Man is a *conscious* Being: he hath a *consciousness* or inward perception, both of things present and past, relating to himself, of his own tempers and outward behaviour. But what we usually term *Conscience*, implies somewhat more than this. It is not barely the knowledge of our present, or the remembrance of our preceding life. To remember, to bear witness either of past or present things, is only one, and the least office of Conscience. Its main business is to excuse or accuse, to approve or disapprove, to acquit or condemn.

5. Some late writers indeed have given a new name to this, and have chosen to stile it, a *moral sense*. But the old word seems preferable to the new, were it only on this account, that it is more common and familiar among men, and therefore easier to be understood. And to Christians it is undeniably preferable, on another account also; namely, be-

cause it is scriptural, because it is the word which the wisdom of God hath chosen to use in the inspired Writings.

And according to the meaning wherein it is generally used there, particularly in the Epistles of St. Paul, we may understand by Conscience, a faculty or power, implanted by God in every soul that comes into the world, of perceiving what is right or wrong in his own heart or life, in his tempers, thoughts, words, and actions.

6. But what is the Rule whereby men are to judge of right and wrong? Whereby their conscience is to be directed? The rule of heathens, as the Apostle teaches elsewhere, is "the law written in their hearts." "These (saith he) not having the [outward] law, are a law unto themselves: who shew the work of the law [that which the outward law prescribes] written in their heart; [by the finger of God] their conscience also bearing witness, [whether they walk by this rule or not] and their thoughts the mean while accusing, or even excusing," acquitting, defending them, (η και απολογουμενων) Rom. ii. 14, 15. But the Christian Rule of right and wrong is the Word of God, the writings of the Old and New Testament; all that the Prophets and "holy men of old" wrote, "as they were moved by the Holy Ghost:" all that *Scripture* which was *given by inspiration of God, and* which *is* indeed *profitable for doctrine*, or teaching the whole will of God: *for reproof* of what is contrary thereto; *for correction* of error, *and for instruction*, (or training us up) *in righteousness*, 2 Tim. iii. 16.

This is *a lanthern unto* a Christian's *feet, and a light in all his paths*. This alone he receives as his rule of right or wrong, of whatever is really good or evil. He esteems nothing good, but what is here enjoined, either directly or by plain consequences. He accounts nothing evil but what is here forbidden, either in terms, or by undeniable inferences. Whatever the Scripture neither forbids nor enjoins, either directly or by plain consequence, he believes to be of an indifferent nature, to be in itself neither good nor evil: this being the whole and sole inward rule, whereby his conscience is to be directed in all things.

7. And if it be directed thereby in fact, then hath he "the answer of a good conscience toward God." *A good conscience* is what is elsewhere termed by the Apostle, a "conscience void of offence." So, what he at one time expresses thus, "I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day," Acts xxiii. 1; he denotes at another, by that expression, "herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man," chap. xxiv. 16. Now, in order to this, there is absolutely required, First, a right understanding of the Word of God, of his "holy, and acceptable, and perfect Will" concerning us, as it is revealed therein. For, it is impossible we should walk by a rule, if we do not know what it means. There is, Secondly, required (which how few have attained!) a true knowledge of ourselves; a knowledge both of our hearts and lives, of our inward tempers and outward conversation: seeing, if we know them not, it is not possible that we should compare them with our rule. There is required, Thirdly, an agreement of our hearts and lives, of our tempers and conversation, of our thoughts, and words, and works, with that rule, with the written Word of God. For, without this, if we have any conscience at all, it can only be an evil conscience. There is, Fourthly, required, an inward perception of this agreement with our rule. And this habitual perception, this inward consciousness itself, is properly a *good conscience;* or, in the other phrase of the Apostle, "A conscience void of offence, toward God and toward man."

8. But whoever desires to have a conscience thus void of offence, let him see that he lay the right foundation. Let him remember, "Other foundation" of this "can no man lay, than that which is laid, even Jesus Christ." And let him also be mindful, that no man buildeth on him but by a living faith; that no man is a partaker of Christ, until he can clearly testify, "The life which I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God;" in him who is now *revealed* in my heart; who "loved me, and gave himself for me." Faith alone is that evidence, that conviction, that demonstration of things invisible, whereby the eyes of our understanding

being opened, and divine light poured in upon them, we "see the wondrous things of God's law," the excellency and purity of it; the height and depth, and length and breadth thereof, and of every commandment contained therein. It is by faith, that beholding "the light of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ," we perceive as in a glass, all that is in ourselves, yea, the inmost motions of our souls. And by this alone can that blessed love of God be "shed abroad in our hearts," which enables us so to love one another as Christ loved us. By this, is that gracious promise fulfilled, unto all the Israel of God, "I will put my laws into their minds, and write (or engrave) them in their hearts," Heb. viii. 10; hereby producing in their souls, an entire agreement with his holy and perfect law, and "bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

And, as an evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit, so a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit. As the heart therefore of a believer, so likewise his life is thoroughly conformed to the rule of God's commandments. In a consciousness whereof, he can give glory to God, and say, with the Apostle, "This is our rejoicing, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world," 2 Cor. i. 12.

9. "We have had our conversation." The Apostle in the original, expresses this by one single word (ανεστραφημεν). But the meaning thereof is exceedingly broad, taking in our whole deportment, yea, every inward as well as outward circumstance, whether relating to our souls or bodies. It includes every motion of our heart, of our tongue, of our hands and bodily members. It extends to all our actions and words; to the employment of all our powers and faculties; to the manner of using every talent we have received, with respect either to God or man.

10. "We have had our conversation in the world;" even in the world of the ungodly: not only among the children of God (that were, comparatively, a little thing:) but

among the children of the devil, among those that *lie in wickedness*, εν τω πονηρω, *in the wicked one*. What a world is this! how thoroughly impregnated with the spirit it continually breathes! As our God is good, and doth good, so the god of this world, and all his children, are evil, and do evil, (so far as they are suffered) to all the children of God. Like their father, they are always lying in wait, or "walking about, seeking whom they may devour:" using fraud or force, secret wiles or open violence, to destroy those who are not of the world: continually warring against our souls, and by old or new weapons, and devices of every kind, labouring to bring them back into the snare of the devil, into the broad road that leadeth to destruction.

11. "We have had our (whole) conversation in (such) a world, in simplicity and godly sincerity." First, *in Simplicity*. This is what our Lord recommends, under the name of a *single eye*. "The light of the body (saith he) is the eye. If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." The meaning whereof is this. What the eye is to the body, that the intention is to all the words and actions. If therefore this eye of thy soul be single, all thy actions and conversation shall be *full of light*, of the light of heaven; of love, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

We are then simple of heart, when the eye of our mind is singly fixed on God: when in all things we aim at God alone, as our God, our Portion, our Strength, our Happiness, our exceeding great Reward, our All, in time and eternity. This is simplicity; when a steady view, a single intention of promoting his glory, of doing and suffering his blessed Will, runs through our whole soul, fills all our heart, and is the constant spring of all our thoughts, desires, and purposes.

12. "We have had our conversation in the world," Secondly, *in godly Sincerity*. The difference between simplicity and sincerity, seems to be chiefly this: simplicity regards the intention itself, sincerity the execution of it. And this sincerity relates not barely to our words, but to our

whole conversation, as described above. It is not here to be understood in that narrow sense, wherein St. Paul himself sometimes uses it, for speaking the truth, or abstaining from guile, from craft, and dissimulation. But in a more extensive meaning, as actually hitting the mark, which we aim at by simplicity. Accordingly, it implies in this place, that we do, in fact, speak, and do all to the glory of God: that all our words are not only pointed at this, but actually conducive thereto; that all our actions flow on in an even stream, uniformly subservient to this great end: and that, in our whole lives, we are moving straight toward God, and that continually; walking steadily on in the Highway of Holiness, in the paths of Justice, Mercy, and Truth.

13. This sincerity is termed by the Apostle, godly Sincerity, or the Sincerity of God, εἰλικρινεια Θεȣ, to prevent our mistaking or confounding it with the sincerity of the heathens: (for they had also a kind of sincerity among them, for which they professed no small veneration;) likewise to denote the object and end of this, as of every Christian virtue; seeing whatever does not ultimately tend to God, sinks among "the beggardly elements of the world." By styling it, the Sincerity of God, he also points out the Author of it, the "Father of Lights, from whom every good and perfect gift descendeth;" which is still more clearly declared in the following words, "Not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God."

14. "Not with fleshly wisdom." As if he had said, We cannot thus converse in the world, by any natural strength or understanding, neither by any naturally acquired knowledge or wisdom. We cannot gain this simplicity, or practise this sincerity, by the force either of good sense, good nature, or good breeding. It overshoots all our native courage and resolution, as well as all our precepts of philosophy. The power of custom is not able to train us up to this, nor the most exquisite rules of human education. Neither could I Paul ever attain hereto, notwithstanding all the advantages I enjoyed, so long as I was *in the flesh*,

in my natural state, and pursued it only by *fleshly*, natural *wisdom*.

And yet, surely, if any man could, Paul himself might have attained thereto by that wisdom. For, we can hardly conceive any, who was more highly favoured with all the gifts both of nature and education. Besides his natural abilities, probably not inferior to those of any person then upon the earth, he had all the benefits of learning, studying at the University of Tarsus, afterwards brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, a person of the greatest account both for knowledge and integrity, that was then in the whole Jewish nation. And he had all the possible advantages of religious education, being a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee, trained up in the very straitest sect or profession, distinguished from all others by a more eminent strictness. And herein he had "profited above many" others, "who were his equals in years, being more abundantly zealous" of whatever he thought would please God, and, "as touching the righteousness of the law blameless." But it could not be, that he should hereby attain this simplicity and godly sincerity. It was all but lost labour; in a deep, piercing sense of which he was at length constrained to cry out, "The things which were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ: Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord," Phil. iii. 7, 8.

15. It could not be that ever he should attain to this, but by the "excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ," our Lord: or "by the grace of God;" another expression of nearly the same import. By "the grace of God" is sometimes to be understood, that free love, that unmerited mercy, by which a sinner, through the merits of Christ, is reconciled to God. But in this place it rather means, that power of God, the Holy Ghost, which "worketh in us both to will and to do, of his good pleasure." As soon as ever the grace of God, in the former sense, his pardoning love, is manifested to our souls; the grace of God, in the latter sense, the power of

his Spirit, takes place therein. And now we can perform, through God, what to man was impossible. Now we can order our conversation aright. We can do all things in the light and power of that love, through Christ, which strengtheneth us. We now have "the testimony of our conscience," which we could never have by fleshly wisdom, "that in simplicity and godly sincerity, we have our conversation in the world."

16. This is properly the ground of a Christian's joy. We may now therefore readily conceive, how he that hath this testimony in himself, rejoiceth evermore. "My soul," may he say, "doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit rejoiceth in God my Saviour." I rejoice in him, who of his own unmerited love, of his own free and tender mercy, "hath called me into this state of salvation," wherein, through his power I now stand. I rejoice because his Spirit beareth witness to my spirit, that I am bought with the blood of the Lamb; and that believing in him, "I am a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." I rejoice, because the sense of God's love to me, hath by the same Spirit wrought in me to love him, and to love for his sake every child of man, every soul that he hath made. I rejoice, because he gives me to feel, in myself, "the mind that was in Christ;" simplicity, a single eye to him, in every motion of my heart; power always to fix the loving eye of my soul on him who "loved me, and gave himself for me," to aim at him alone, at his glorious will, in all I think, or speak, or do: purity, desiring nothing more but God, "crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts," "setting my affections on things above, not on things of the earth:" holiness, a recovery of the image of God, a renewal of soul after his likeness; and godly sincerity, directing all my words and works, so as to conduce to his glory. In this I likewise rejoice, yea, and will rejoice, because my conscience beareth me witness in the Holy Ghost, by the light he continually pours in upon it, that I "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith I am called:" that I "abstain from all appearance of evil, fleeing from sin as from the face of a ser-

pent;" that as I have opportunity, I do all possible good, in every kind, to all men; that I follow my Lord in all my steps, and do what is acceptable in his sight. I rejoice, because I both see and feel, through the inspiration of God's holy Spirit, that all my works are wrought in him, yea, and that it is he who worketh all my works in me. I rejoice, in seeing through the light of God, which shines in my heart, that I have power to walk in his ways, and that through his grace, I turn not therefrom, to the right hand or to the left.

17. Such is the ground and nature of that joy, whereby an adult Christian rejoiceth evermore. And from all this we may easily infer, First, That this is not a *natural* joy. It does not arise from any natural cause: not from any sudden flow of spirits. This may give a transient start of joy. But the Christian *rejoiceth always*. It cannot be owing to bodily health or ease; to strength and soundness of constitution. For, it is equally strong in sickness and pain; yea, perhaps far stronger than before. Many Christians have never experienced any joy, to be compared with that which then filled their soul, when the body was well nigh worn out with pain, or consumed away with pining sickness. Least of all can it be ascribed to outward prosperity, to the favour of men, or plenty of worldly goods. For then chiefly, when their faith has been tried, as with fire, by all manner of outward afflictions, have the children of God rejoiced in him, whom unseen they loved, even with joy unspeakable. And never surely did men rejoice like those, who were used as "the filth and off-scouring of the world;" who, wandering to and fro, being in want of all things; in hunger, in cold, in nakedness; who had trials, not only of "cruel mockings," but, "moreover of bonds and imprisonments:" yea, who at last "counted not their lives dear unto themselves, so *they* might finish their course with joy."

18. From the preceding considerations, we may, Secondly, infer, That the joy of a Christian does not arise from any "blindness of conscience," from his not being able to discern good from evil. So far from it, that he was in

utter stranger to this joy, till the eyes of his understanding were opened! that he knew it not, until he had spiritual senses, fitted to discern spiritual good and evil. And now the eye of his soul waxeth not dim. He was never so sharp-sighted before. He has so quick a perception of the smallest things, as is quite amazing to the natural man. As a mote is visible in the sun-beam, so to him who is walking in the light, in the beams of the uncreated Sun, every mote of sin is visible. Nor does he close the eyes of his conscience any more. That sleep is departed from him. His soul is always broad awake: no more slumber or folding of the hands to rest! He is always standing on the tower, and hearkening what his Lord will say concerning him: and always rejoicing in this very thing, in "seeing him that is invisible."

19. Neither does the joy of a Christian arise, Thirdly, from any *dullness* or *callousness of conscience*. A kind of joy, it is true, may arise from this, in those whose "foolish hearts are darkened:" whose hearts are callous, unfeeling, dull of sense; and consequently without spiritual understanding. Because of their senseless, unfeeling hearts, they may rejoice even in committing sin: And this they may probably call *Liberty!* Which is indeed mere drunkenness of soul: a fatal numbness of spirit, the stupid insensibility of a seared conscience. On the contrary, a Christian has the most exquisite sensibility; such as he could not have conceived before. He never had such a tenderness of conscience as he has had, since the love of God has reigned in his heart. And this also is his glory and joy: that God hath heard his daily prayer:

> "O that my tender soul might fly
> The first abhorr'd approach of ill:
> Quick, as the apple of an eye,
> The slightest touch of sin to feel."

20. To conclude. Christian joy, is joy in obedience: joy in loving God and keeping his commandments. And yet not in keeping them, as if we were thereby to fulfil the terms of the "Covenant of Works;" as if by any works or

righteousness of ours, we were to *procure* pardon and acceptance with God. Not so: we are already pardoned and accepted, through the mercy of God in Christ Jesus. Not as if we were by our own obedience to *procure* life, life from the death of sin. This also we have already through the grace of God. Us "hath he quickened, who were dead in sin." And now we are "alive to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." But we rejoice in walking, according to the "covenant of grace," in holy love and happy obedience. We rejoice in knowing, that "being justified through his grace," we have "not received that grace of God in vain;" that God having freely (not for the sake of our willing or running, but through the blood of the Lamb) reconciled us to himself, we run in the strength which he hath given us, the way of his commandments. He hath "girded us with strength unto the war," and we gladly "fight the good fight of faith." We rejoice, through him who liveth in our hearts by faith, to "lay hold on eternal life." This is our rejoicing: that as our "Father worketh hitherto," so (not by our own might or wisdom, but through the power of his Spirit, freely given in Christ Jesus) we also work the works of God. And may he work in us, whatsoever is well pleasing in his sight! To whom be the praise for ever and ever!

☞ It may easily be observed, that the preceding Discourse describes the Experience of those that are *strong* in Faith. But hereby those that are *weak* in Faith may be discouraged: to prevent which the following Discourse may be of use.

SERMON XIII.

ON SIN IN BELIEVERS.

2 Corinthians v. 17.

"*If any Man be in Christ, he is a new Creature.*"

I. 1. IS there then sin in him that is in Christ? Does sin *remain* in one that *believes in him?* Is there any sin in them that are *born of God*, or are they wholly delivered from it? Let no one imagine this to be a question of mere curiosity: or that it is of little importance whether it be determined one way or the other. Rather it is a point of the utmost moment to every serious Christian: the resolving of which very nearly concerns both his present and eternal happiness.

2. And yet I do not know that ever it was controverted in the primitive church. Indeed there was no room for disputing concerning it, as all Christians were agreed. And so far as I have ever observed, the whole body of ancient Christians who have left us any thing in writing, declare with one voice, that even believers in Christ, till they are "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might," have need to "wrestle with flesh and blood," with an evil nature, as well as "with principalities and powers."

3. And herein our own church (as indeed in most points) exactly copies after the primitive; declaring, in her ninth article, "Original sin is the corruption of the nature of every

man, whereby man is in his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth contrary to the Spirit. And this infection of nature doth remain, even in them that are regenerated; whereby the lust of the flesh, called in Greek φρονημα σαρκος, is not subject to the law of God. And although there is no condemnation for them that believe, yet this lust hath of itself the nature of sin."

4. The same testimony is given by all other churches: not only by the Greek and Romish church, but by every reformed church in Europe, of whatever denomination. Indeed some of these seem to carry the thing too far: so describing the corruption of heart in a believer, as scarcely to allow that he has dominion over it, but rather is in bondage thereto. And by this means they leave hardly any distinction between a believer and an unbeliever.

5. To avoid this extreme, many well-meaning men, particularly those under the direction of the late Count Zinzendorf, ran into another; affirming, that "all true believers are not only saved from the *dominion* of sin, but from the *being* of inward as well as outward sin, so that it no longer *remains* in them." And from them, about twenty years ago, many of our countrymen imbibed the same opinion, that even the corruption of nature *is no more*, in those who believe in Christ.

6. It is true, that when the Germans were pressed upon this head, they soon allowed (many of them at least) that "sin did still remain *in the flesh*, but not *in the heart* of a believer." And after a time, when the absurdity of this was shewn, they fairly gave up the point: allowing that sin did still remain, though not reign in him that is born of God.

7. But the English, who had received it from them, (some directly, some at second or third hand) were not so easily prevailed upon, to part with a favourite opinion. And even when the generality of them were convinced it was utterly indefensible, a few could not be persuaded to give it up, but maintain it to this day.

II. 1. For the sake of those who really fear God, and desire to know "the truth as it is in Jesus," it may not be

amiss, to consider the point with calmness and impartiality. In doing this, I use indifferently the words *regenerate, justified,* or *believers:* since though they have not precisely the same meaning, (the first implying an inward, actual change, the second a relative one, and the third, the means whereby both the one and the other are wrought:) yet they come to one and the same thing; as every one that believes, is both "justified and born of God."

2. By sin I here understand inward sin: any sinful temper, passion or affection: such as pride, self-will, love of the world, in any kind or degree: such as lust, anger, peevishness; any disposition, contrary to the mind which was in Christ.

3. The question is not concerning *outward sin:* whether a child of God *commit sin* or not? We all agree and earnestly maintain, "He that committeth sin is of the devil." We agree, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin." Neither do we now enquire whether inward sin will *always* remain in the children of God; whether sin will continue in the soul, as long as it continues in the body; nor yet do we enquire, whether a justified person may *relapse* either into inward or outward sin; but simply this, is a justified or regenerate man freed from *all sin,* as soon as he is justified? Is there no sin in his heart? Nor ever after, unless he fall from grace?

4. We allow that the state of a justified person is inexpressibly great and glorious. He is "born again, not of blood, nor of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." He is a child of God, a member of Christ, an heir of the kingdom of heaven. "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keepeth his heart and mind in Christ Jesus." His very body is a "temple of the Holy Ghost, and a habitation of God through the Spirit." He is "created anew in Christ Jesus:" he is *washed,* he is *sanctified.* His heart is purified by faith: he is cleansed "from the corruption that is in the world." "The love of God is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto him." And so long as he "walketh in love," (which he may always

do) he worships God in spirit and in truth. He keepeth the commandments of God, and doth those things that are pleasing in his sight: so exercising himself as to "have a conscience void of offence, toward God and toward man." And he has power both over outward and inward sin, even from the moment he is justified.

III. 1. But was he not then "freed from all sin," so that there is no sin in his heart? I cannot say this, I cannot believe it: because St. Paul says the contrary. He is speaking to believers, and describing the state of believers in general, when he says, "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: these are contrary the one to the other," Gal. v. 17. Nothing can be more express. The apostle here directly affirms that the flesh, evil nature, opposes the Spirit, even in believers; that even in the regenerate, there are two principles, "contrary the one to the other."

2. Again. When he writes to the believers at Corinth, to those who were "sanctified in Christ Jesus, 1 Cor. i. 2, he says, "I brethren, could not speak unto you, as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, as unto babes in Christ: Ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying and strife, are ye not carnal?" ch. iii. ver. 3. Now here the apostle speaks unto those who were unquestionably believers, whom in the same breath he stiles his brethren in Christ, as being still, in a measure, carnal. He affirms, there was envying, (an evil temper) occasioning strife among them, and yet does not give the least intimation, that they had lost their faith. Nay, he manifestly declares, they had not; for then they would not have been babes in Christ. And (what is most remarkable of all) he speaks of being carnal, and babes in Christ, as one and the same thing, plainly shewing that every believer is (in a degree) carnal, while he is only a babe in Christ.

3. Indeed this grand point, that there are two contrary principles in believers, nature and grace, the flesh and the Spirit, runs through all the epistles of St. Paul, yea, through all the Holy Scriptures: almost all the directions and exhortations therein, are founded on this supposition: pointing at

wrong tempers in those, who were, notwithstanding, acknowledged by the inspired writers to be believers. And they are continually exhorted to fight and conquer these, by the power of the faith which was in them.

4. And who can doubt, but there was faith in the angel of the church of Ephesus, when our Lord said to him, "I know thy works, and thy patience: thou hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured and hast not fainted," Rev. ii. 2, 3, 4. But was there in the mean time no sin in his heart? Yea, or Christ would not have added, "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." This was a real sin which God saw in his heart, (of which accordingly he is exhorted to *repent*.) And yet we have no authority to say, that even then he had no faith.

5. Nay, the angel of the church at Pergamos also, is exhorted to *repent*, which implies sin, though our Lord expressly says, "Thou hast not denied my faith," ver. 13, 16. And to the angel of the church in Sardis, he says, "Strengthen the things which remain that are ready to die." The good which remained was *ready to die;* but was not actually dead, chap. iii. 2. So there was still a spark of faith even in him; which he is accordingly commanded to *hold fast*, ver. 3.

6. Once more. When the Apostle exhorts believers to *cleanse* themselves *from all filthiness of flesh and spirit*, (2 Cor. vii. 1,) he plainly teaches, that these believers were not yet cleansed therefrom.

Will you answer, "He that abstains from all appearance of evil, does *ipso facto* cleanse himself from all filthiness." Not in any wise. For instance: a man reviles me; I feel resentment, which is *filthiness of spirit*. Yet I say not a word. Here I *abstain from all appearance of evil*. But this does not cleanse me from that filthiness of spirit, as I experience to my sorrow.

7. And as this position, there is no sin in a believer, no carnal mind, no bent to backsliding, is thus contrary to the Word of God, so it is to the experience of his children. These continually feel a bent to backsliding, a natural ten-

dency to evil; a proneness to depart from God, and cleave to the things of earth. They are daily sensible of sin remaining in their heart, pride, self-will, unbelief: and of sin cleaving to all they speak or do, even their best actions and holiest duties. Yet at the same time they *know they are of God;* they cannot doubt of it for a moment. They *feel his Spirit* clearly "witnessing with their spirit, that they are the children of God." They "rejoice in God through Christ Jesus, by whom they have now received the atonement." So that they are equally assured, that sin is in them, and that "Christ is in them the hope of glory."

8. "But can Christ be in the same heart where sin is?" Undoubtedly he can. Otherwise it never could be saved therefrom. Where the sickness is, there is the physician,

Carrying on his work within,
Striving till he cast out sin.

Christ indeed cannot *reign*, where sin *reigns:* neither will he *dwell* where any sin is allowed. But he *is* and *dwells* in the heart of every believer, who is fighting against all sin; although it be not yet purified, according to the purification of the sanctuary.

9. It has been observed before, that the opposite doctrine, "That there is no sin in believers," is quite new in the church of Christ: that it was never heard of for seventeen hundred years, never till it was discovered by Count Zinzendorf. I do not remember to have seen the least intimation of it, either in any ancient or modern writers; unless perhaps in some of the wild, ranting Antinomians. And these likewise say and unsay, acknowledging there is sin *in their flesh*, although no *sin in their heart*. But whatever doctrine is *new* must be *wrong:* for the *old* religion is the only *true* one. And no doctrine can be right, unless it is the very same "which was from the beginning."

10. One argument more against this new, unscriptural doctrine, may be drawn from the dreadful consequences of it. One says, "I felt anger to-day." Must I reply, "Then you have no faith?" Another says, "I know what you ad-

vise is good, but my will is quite averse to it." Must I tell him, "Then you are an unbeliever, under the wrath and curse of God?" What will be the natural consequence of this? Why, if he believes what I say, his soul will not only be grieved and wounded, but perhaps utterly destroyed: inasmuch as he will *cast away* that *confidence which hath great recompence of reward.* And having cast away his shield, how shall he "quench the fiery darts of the wicked one?" How shall he overcome the world? Seeing "this is the victory that overcometh the world even our faith." He stands disarmed in the midst of his enemies, open to all their assaults. What wonder then if he be utterly overthrown; if they take him captive at their will? Yea, if he fall from one wickedness to another, and never see good any more?—I cannot therefore by any means receive this assertion, that there is no sin in a believer from the moment he is justified; First, because it is contrary to the whole tenor of Scripture. Secondly, because it is contrary to the experience of the children of God. Thirdly, because it is absolutely new, never heard of in the world till yesterday: and, Lastly, because it is naturally attended with the most fatal consequences; not only grieving those whom God hath not grieved; but perhaps dragging them into everlasting perdition.

IV. 1. However let us give a fair hearing to the chief arguments of those who endeavour to support it. And it is, first, from Scripture they attempt to prove, that there is no sin in a believer. (They argue thus.) "The Scripture says, Every believer is *born of God*, is *clean*, is *holy*, is *sanctified*: is *pure in heart*, has a new heart, is a temple of the Holy Ghost. Now, as *that which is born of the flesh is flesh*, is altogether evil, so *that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit*, is altogether good. Again; a man cannot be clean, sanctified, holy, and at the same time unclean, unsanctified, unholy. He cannot be pure and impure, or have a new and an old heart together. Neither can his soul be unholy, while it is a temple of the Holy Ghost."

I have put this objection as strong as possible, that its full weight may appear. Let us now examine it, part by part.

And, 1, "*That which is born of the Spirit, is spirit*, is altogether good." I allow the text, but not the comment. For the text affirms this, and no more, That every man who is *born of the Spirit*, is a *spiritual man*. He is so. But so he may be, and yet not be *altogether spiritual*. The Christians at Corinth were *spiritual* men. Else they had been no Christians at all. And yet they were not *altogether* spiritual. They were still (in part) *carnal*. "But they were fallen from grace." St. Paul says no. They were even *babes in* Christ. 2, "But a man cannot be *clean, sanctified, holy*, and at the same time *unclean, unsanctified, unholy*." Indeed he may. So the Corinthians were. *Ye are washed*, says the apostle, *ye are sanctified:* namely cleansed from *fornication, idolatry, drunkenness*, and all other outward sin, 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, 11. And yet at the same time, in another sense of the word, they were *unsanctified:* they were not *washed*, not inwardly *cleansed* from envy, evil-surmising, partiality. "But sure they had not a new heart and an old heart together." It is most sure, they had. For at that very time, their hearts were *truly*, yet not *entirely* renewed. Their carnal mind was nailed to the cross. Yet it was not wholly destroyed. "But could they be *unholy*, while they were *temples of the Holy Ghost?*" Yes, that they were *temples of the Holy Ghost*, is certain, 1 Cor. vi. 19. And it is equally certain, they were, in some degree, *carnal*, that is, *unholy*.

2. "However, there is one scripture more which will put the matter out of question. 'If any man be [a believer] in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things are past away; behold all things are become new,' 2 Cor. v. 17. Now certainly a man cannot be a *new creature* and an *old creature* at once." Yes, he may. He may be *partly renewed*, which was the very case with those at Corinth. They were doubtless *renewed in the spirit of their mind*, or they could not have been so much as *babes in Christ*. Yet they had not the whole mind which was *in Christ*, for they *envied* one another. "But it is said expressly, *Old things are past away: all things are become new*." But we must not so in-

terpret the Apostle's words, as to make him contradict himself. And if we will make him consistent with himself, the plain meaning of the words is this: His *old judgment* concerning justification, holiness, happiness, indeed concerning the things of God in general, is now *past away*. So are his *old desires, designs, and affections, tempers*, and *conversation*. All these are undeniably *become new*, greatly changed from what they were. And yet, tho' they *are new*, they are not *wholly new*. Still he feels to his sorrow and shame, remains of the *old man*, too manifest taints of his former tempers and affections, tho' they cannot *gain* any *advantage* over him, as long as he *watches unto prayer*.

3. This whole argument, "If he is clean, he is clean," "if he is holy, he is holy;" (and twenty more expressions of the same kind may easily be heaped together,) is really no better than playing upon words: it is the fallacy of arguing from a *particular* to a *general*; of inferring a general conclusion, from particular premises. Propose the sentence entire, and it runs thus: "If he is holy *at all*, he is holy *altogether*." That does not follow: every babe in Christ is holy, and yet not altogether so. He is saved from sin; yet not entirely: it *remains*, tho' it does not *reign*. If you think it does not *remain*, (in *babes* at least, whatever be the case with *young men*, or *fathers*,) you certainly have not considered the height, depth, length, and breadth of the law of God; (even the law of love, laid down by St. Paul in the thirteenth of Corinthians,) and that *every* (ανομια) disconformity to, or deviation from this law, *is sin*. Now, is there no disconformity to this in the heart or life of a believer? What may be in an adult Christian, is another question. But what a stranger must he be to human nature, who can possibly imagine, that this is the case with every babe in Christ!

4. "But believers *walk after the Spirit*, * Rom. viii. 1,

* What follows for some pages is an answer to a paper, published in the Christian Magazine, p. 577—582. I am surprised Dr. Dodd, should give such a paper place in his Magazine, which is contrary to our ninth Article.

and the Spirit of God *dwells* in them. Consequently they are delivered from the guilt, the power, *or, in one word*, the being of sin."

These are coupled together, as if they were the same thing. But they are not the same thing. The *guilt* is one thing, the *power* another, and the *being*, yet another. That believers are delivered from the *guilt* and *power* of sin we allow; that they are delivered from the *being* of it we deny. Nor does it in any wise follow from these texts. A man may have the Spirit of God *dwelling* in him, and may "walk after the Spirit," though he still feels "the flesh lusting against the Spirit."

5. "But the *church is the body of Christ*, Col. i. 24. This implies, that its members are washed from all filthiness. Otherwise it will follow, that Christ and Belial, are incorporated with each other."

Nay, it will not follow from hence, "those who are the mystical body of Christ, still feel the flesh lusting against the Spirit," that Christ has any fellowship with the devil, or with that sin which he enables them to resist and overcome.

6. "But are not Christians *come to the heavenly Jerusalem*, where *nothing defiled can enter?*" Heb. xii. 22. Yes; *and to an innumerable company of angels, and to the spirits of just men made perfect:* that is,

"Earth and heaven all agree;
All is one great family."

And they are likewise *holy* and *undefiled*, while they *walk after the Spirit:* although sensible, there is another principle in them, and that *these are contrary to each other.*

7. "But Christians are *reconciled to God.* Now this could not be, if any of the *carnal mind* remained: for this is enmity against God: consequently, no reconciliation can be effected, but by its total destruction."

We are *reconciled to God through the blood of the cross.* And in the moment, the φρονημα σαρκος, the corruption of nature, which is *enmity with God*, is put under our feet, the

flesh has *no more dominion* over us. But it still *exists:* and it is still in its nature enmity with God, lusting against his Spirit.

8. "But *they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with its affections and lusts,*" Gal. v. 24. They have so: yet it remains in them still, and often struggles to break from the cross. "Nay, but they have *put off the old man with his deeds,*" Col. iii. 9. They have: and in the sense above described, "old things are passed away; all things are become new." A hundred texts may be cited to the same effect. And they will all admit of the same answer. "But to say all in one word, *Christ gave himself for the Church, that it might be holy, and without blemish,*" Eph. v. 25, 27. And so will it be in the end: but it never was yet, from the beginning to this day.

9. "But let experience speak. All who are justified do at that time find an absolute freedom from all sin." That I doubt: but, if they do, do they find it ever after? Else you gain nothing. "If they do not, it is their own fault." That remains to be proved.

10. "But in the very nature of things, can a man have pride in him, and not be proud? Anger, and yet not be angry?"

A man may have *pride* in him, may think himself in *some particulars* above what he ought to think, (and so be proud in that particular,) and yet not be a proud man in his general character. He may have *anger* in him, yea, and a strong propensity to furious anger, without *giving way* to it. "But can anger and pride be in that heart, where *only* meekness and humility are felt?" No: but *some* pride and anger may be in that heart, where there is much humility and meekness.

"It avails not to say, these tempers are there, but they do not *reign.* For sin cannot, in any kind or degree, exist where it does not reign. For *guilt* and *power* are essential properties of sin. Therefore, where one of them is, all must be."

Strange indeed! "Sin cannot, in any kind or degree, *exist*

where it does not reign." Absolutely contrary this to all experience, all scripture, all common sense. Resistance of an attempt is sin, it is sense, discordantly to the law of love. This has existed in me a thousand times. Yet it did not, and does not reign. "But guilt and power are essential properties of sin; therefore, where one is, all must be." No: in the instance before us, if the assessment I find is not ratified in, even for a moment, there is no guilt at all, no condemnation from God upon that account. And in this case, it has no power: though it *striveth against the Spirit*, it cannot prevail. Here, therefore, in a ten thousand instances, there is sin without either *guilt* or *power*.

II. "But the supposing sin in a believer is pregnant with every thing ingenuine and discouraging. It implies the contending with a power, that has the possession of our strength, maintains the usurpation of our hearts, and there prosecutes the war in defiance of our Redeemer." No sir. The supposing sin in us does not imply, that it has the possession of our strength. No more than a man crucified has the possession of those that crucify him. As little does it imply, that "sin maintains its usurpation of our hearts." The usurper is dethroned. He remains indeed where he once reigned; but remains as *slave*. So that he does, in some sense, "prosecute the war," yet he grows weaker and weaker: while the believer goes on from strength to strength, conquering and to conquer.

III. "I am not satisfied yet. He that has sin in him, is a slave to sin. Therefore, you suppose a man to be justified, while he is a slave to sin. Now, if you allow, men may be justified while they have pride, anger, or unbelief in them; nay, if *you* over. These are, at least, for a time, in all that are justified. What wonder that we have so many proud, angry, unbelieving believers!"

I do not suppose any man who is justified, is a slave to sin. Yet, I do suppose, sin remains (at least for a time) in all that are justified. "But, if sin remains in a believer, he is a sinful man: if pride, for instance, then he is proud: if self-will, then he is self-willed; if unbelief, then he is an

unbeliever; consequently, no believer at all. How then does he differ from unbelievers, from unregenerate men?"

This is still mere playing upon words. It means no more, than, if there is sin, pride, self-will in him, then—there is sin, pride, self-will. And this no body can deny. In that sense then he is proud, or self-willed. But he is not proud or self-willed in the same sense that unbelievers are, that is, *governed* by pride or self-will. Herein he differs from unregenerate men. They *obey* sin, he does not. Flesh is in them both. But they *walk after the flesh:* he *walks after the Spirit.*

"But how can *unbelief* be in a believer?" That word has two meanings. It means either no faith, or little faith; either the *absence* of faith, or the *weakness* of it. In the former sense, unbelief is not in a believer: in the latter, it is in all babes. Their faith is commonly mixed with doubt or fear, that is, in the latter sense, with unbelief. "Why are ye fearful, says our Lord, O ye of little faith?" Again, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" You see here was *unbelief* in *a believer:* little faith and much unbelief.

13. "But this doctrine, That sin remains in a believer: That a man may be in the favour of God, while he has sin in his heart, certainly tends to encourage men in sin." Understand the proposition right, and no such consequence follows. A man may be in God's favour though he feel sin; but not if he *yields* to it. *Having sin,* does not forfeit the favour of God; *giving way to sin* does. Though the flesh in *you lust against the Spirit,* you may still be a child of God. But if you *walk after the flesh,* you are a child of the devil. Now this doctrine does not encourage you to *obey* sin, but to resist it with all your might.

V. 1. The sum of all is this. There are in every person, even after he is justified, two contrary principles, nature and grace, termed by St. Paul, the *flesh* and the *spirit.* Hence, although even babes in Christ are *sanctified,* yet it is only in part. In a degree, according to the measure of their faith, they are spiritual: yet, in a degree they are carnal. Ac-

oordingly, believers are continually exhorted to watch against the flesh, as well as the world and the devil. And to this agrees the constant experience of the children of God. While they feel this witness in themselves, they feel a will not wholly resigned to the will of God. They know they are in him, and yet find a heart ready to depart from him, a proneness to evil in many instances, and a backwardness to that which is good. The contrary doctrine is wholly new: never heard of in the church of Christ, from the time of his coming into the world, till the time of Count Zinzendorf. And it is attended with the most fatal consequences. It cuts off all watching against our evil nature, against the Delilah, which we are told is gone, though she is still lying in our bosom. It tears away the shield of weak believers, deprives them of their faith, and so leaves them exposed to all the assaults of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

2. Let us, therefore, hold fast the sound doctrine "once delivered to the saints," and delivered down by them, with the written word, to all succeeding generations: that, although we are renewed, cleansed, purified, sanctified, the moment we truly believe in Christ, yet we are not then renewed, cleansed, purified altogether: but the flesh, the evil nature still *remains* (though subdued) and wars *against* the Spirit. So much the more, let us use all diligence in "fighting the good fight of faith." So much the more earnestly let us "watch and pray," against the enemy within. The more carefully let us *take* to ourselves, and "put on the whole armour of God:" that, although "we wrestle" both "with flesh and blood, and with principalities, and powers, and wicked spirits in high places," we "may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."

SERMON XIV.

THE REPENTANCE OF BELIEVERS.

MARK i. 15.

"*Repent ye, and believe the Gospel.*"

1. IT is generally supposed, That Repentance and Faith are only the Gate of Religion; that they are necessary only at the beginning of our Christian course, when we are setting out in the way to the kingdom. And this may seem to be confirmed by the great Apostle, where, exhorting the Hebrew Christians to "go on to perfection," he teaches them to *leave* these "first principles of the doctrine of Christ: not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith towards God:" which must at least mean, that they should comparatively leave these, that at first took up all their thoughts, in order to "press forward toward the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

2. And this is undoubtedly true, that there is a Repentance and a Faith, which are, more especially, necessary at the beginning. A Repentance, which is a conviction of our utter sinfulness, and guiltiness, and helplessness: and which precedes our receiving that kingdom of God, which our Lord observes, is "within us," and a Faith, whereby we

receive that kingdom, even "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

3. But, notwithstanding this, there is also a Repentance and a Faith, (taking the words in another sense, a sense not quite the same, nor yet entirely different,) which are requisite after we have "believed the Gospel;" yea, and in every subsequent stage of our Christian course, or we cannot "run the race which is set before us." And this Repentance and Faith are full as necessary, in order to our continuance and growth in grace, as the former Faith and Repentance were, in order to our entering into the kingdom of God.

But in what sense are we to repent and believe, after we are justified? This is an important question, and worthy of being considered with the utmost attention.

I. And, first, In what sense are we to repent?

1. Repentance frequently means, an inward change, a change of mind from sin to holiness. But now we speak of it in quite a different sense, as it is one kind of Self-knowledge, the knowing ourselves sinners, yea, guilty, helpless sinners, even though we know we are children of God.

2. Indeed when we first know this, when we first find redemption in the blood of Jesus, when the Love of God is first shed abroad in our hearts, and his Kingdom set up therein, it is natural to suppose that we are no longer sinners, that all our sins are not only covered but destroyed. As we do not then feel any evil in our hearts, we readily imagine none is there. Nay, some well-meaning men have imagined this not only at that time, but ever after; having persuaded themselves, that when they were justified, they were entirely sanctified. Yea, they have laid it down as a general rule, in spite of Scripture, Reason, and Experience. These sincerely believe and earnestly maintain, that all sin is destroyed when we are justified, and that there is no sin in the heart of a believer, but that it is altogether clean from that moment. But though we readily acknowledge, "he that believeth is born of God," and "he that is born of

God doth not commit sin:" yet, we cannot allow that he does not *feel* it within: it does not *reign*, but it does remain. And a conviction of the sin which *remains* in our heart, is one great branch of the repentance we are now speaking of.

3. For it is seldom long, before he, who imagined all sin was gone, feels there is still *Pride* in his heart. He is convinced both that in many respects he has thought of himself more highly than he ought to think, and that he has taken to himself the praise of something he had received, and gloried in it as though he had not received it. And yet he knows, he is in the favour of God. He cannot, and ought not, to *cast away* his *confidence*. *The Spirit* still *witnesses with* his *spirit, that he is a child of God.*

4. Nor is it long before he feels *Self-will* in his heart, even a Will contrary to the Will of God. A Will every man must inevitably have, as long as he has an Understanding. This is an essential part of human Nature, indeed of the nature of every intelligent Being. Our blessed Lord himself had a Will as a man: otherwise he had not been a man. But his human Will was invariably subject to the Will of his Father. At all times, and on all occasions, even in the deepest affliction, he could say, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt." But this is not the case at all times, even with a true believer in Christ. He frequently finds his will more or less exalting itself against the Will of God. He wills something, because it is pleasing to nature, which is not pleasing to God. And he nills, (is averse from,) something, because it is painful to nature, which is the will of God concerning him. Indeed, suppose he continues in the faith, he fights against it with all his might. But this very thing implies, that it really exists, and that he is conscious of it.

5. Now Self-will, as well as Pride, is a species of Idolatry: and both are directly contrary to the Love of God. The same observation may be made, concerning the "love of the world." But this likewise even true believers are liable to feel in themselves; and every one of them does feel it,

more or less, sooner or later, in one branch or another. It is true, when he first "passes from death unto life," he desires nothing more but God. He can truly say, "All my desire is unto thee, and unto the remembrance of thy name." "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee!" But it is not so always. In process of time he will feel again, though perhaps only for a few moments, either "the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, or the pride of life." Nay, if he do not continually watch and pray, he may find *Lust* reviving; yea, and thrusting sore at him that he may fall, till he has scarcely any strength left in him. He may feel the assaults of *inordinate Affection*, yea, a strong propensity to "love the creature more than the Creator:" whether it be a child, a parent, a husband or wife, or "the friend that is as his own soul." He may feel, in a thousand various ways, a desire of earthly things or pleasures. In the same proportion he will forget God, not seeking his happiness in him, and consequently being a "lover of pleasure more than a lover of God."

6. If he do not keep himself every moment, he will again feel "the Desire of the Eye," the desire of gratifying his imagination, with something great, or beautiful, or uncommon. In how many ways does this desire assault the soul? Perhaps with regard to the poorest trifles, such as dress, or furniture: things never designed to satisfy the appetite of an immortal Spirit. Yet, how natural is it for us, even after we have "tasted of the powers of the world to come," to sink again into these foolish, low desires of things, that perish in the using! How hard is it, even for those who know in whom they have believed, to conquer but one branch of the desire of the eye, Curiosity! Constantly to trample it under their feet! To desire nothing, merely because it is new?

7. And how hard is it even for the children of God wholly to conquer *the Pride of Life?* St. John seems to mean by this nearly the same with what the world terms the sense of honour. This is no other than a desire of, and de-

light in, "the honour that cometh of men." A desire and love of praise, and, which is always joined with it, a proportionable *fear of dispraise*. Nearly allied to this is *evil shame*: the being ashamed of that wherein we ought to glory. And this is seldom divided from the *fear of man*, which brings a thousand snares upon the soul. Now where is he, even among those that seem strong in faith, who does not find in himself a degree of all these evil tempers? So that even these are but in part "crucified to the world:" for the evil root still remains in their heart.

8. And do we not feel other tempers, which are as contrary to the love of our neighbour as these are to the love of God? The love of our neighbour "thinketh no evil;" do we not find any thing of the kind? Do we never find any *jealousies*, any *evil surmisings*, any groundless or unreasonable suspicions? He that is clear in these respects, let him cast the first stone at his neighbour. Who does not sometimes feel other tempers or inward motions, which he knows are contrary to brotherly love? If nothing of *malice*, *hatred*, or *bitterness*, is there no touch of *envy*? Particularly toward those who enjoy some (real or supposed) good, which we desire but cannot attain? Do we never find any degree of *resentment*, when we are injured or affronted? Especially by those whom we peculiarly loved, and whom we had most laboured to help or oblige? Does injustice or ingratitude never excite us to any desire of *revenge*? Any desire of returning evil for evil, instead of "overcoming evil with good?" This also shews, how much is still in our heart, which is contrary to the love of our neighbour.

9. *Covetousness*, in every kind and degree, is certainly as contrary to this as to the love of God: Whether φιλαργυρια, *the love of money*, which is too frequently, "the root of all evil," or πλεονεξια, literally, a desire of *having more*, or increasing in substance. And how few, even of the real children of God, are entirely free from both? Indeed one great man, Martin Luther, used to say, He "never had any covetousness in him (not only in his converted state, but) ever since he was born." But, if so, I would not scruple to

say, He was the only man born of a woman, (except him that was God as well as man,) who had not, who was born without it. Nay, I believe, never was any born of God, that lived any considerable time after, who did not feel more or less of it many times, especially in the latter sense. We may therefore set it down as an undoubted truth, that *covetousness*, together with pride, self-will, and anger, *remain* in the hearts of them that are justified.

10. It is their experiencing this which has inclined so many serious persons, to understand the latter part of the seventh chapter to the Romans, not of them that are "under the law," that are convinced of sin, which is undoubtedly the meaning of the Apostle, but of them that are "under grace," that are "justified freely thro' the redemption that is in Christ." And it is most certain, they are thus far right: there does still *remain* even in them that are justified, a *mind* which is in some measure *carnal;* (so the Apostle tells even the believers at Corinth, "Ye are carnal:) an *heart bent to backsliding*, still ever ready to "depart from the living God: a propensity to pride, self-will, anger, revenge, love of the world, yea, and all evil; a root of bitterness, which, if the restraint were taken off for a moment, would instantly spring up: yea, such a depth of corruption, as, without clear light from God, we cannot possibly conceive. And a conviction of all this sin *remaining* in their hearts, is the repentance which belongs to them that are justified.

11. But we should likewise be convinced that as sin remains in our hearts, so it *cleaves* to all our words and actions. Indeed it is to be feared, that many of our words are more than mixed with sin; that they are all sinful altogether; for such undoubtedly is all *uncharitable conversation:* all which does not spring from brotherly love, all which does not agree with that golden rule, "What ye would that others should do to you, even so do unto them." Of this kind is all back-biting, all tale-bearing, all whispering, all evil-speaking; that is, repeating the faults of absent persons: for none would have others repeat his faults when he is ab-

sent. Now how few are there, even among believers, who are in no degree guilty of this! Who steadily observe the good old rule, "Of the dead and the absent, speak nothing but good." And suppose they do, do they likewise abstain from *unprofitable conversation?* Yet all this is unquestionably sinful, and *grieves the Holy Spirit of God:* yea, and "for every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give an account in the day of judgment."

12. But let it be supposed, that they continually "watch and pray," and so do "not enter into *this* temptation;" that they constantly set a watch before their mouth, and keep the door of their lips: suppose they exercise themselves herein, that *all* their "conversation may be in grace, seasoned with salt, and meet to minister grace to the hearers;" yet do they not daily slide into useless discourse, notwithstanding all their caution? And even when they endeavour to speak for God, are their words pure, free from unholy mixtures? Do they find nothing wrong in their very *Intention?* Do they speak merely to please God, and not partly to please themselves? Is it wholly to do the will of God, and not to do their own will also?—Or, if they begin with a single eye, do they go on "looking unto Jesus," and talking with him all the time they are with their neighbour? When they are reproving sin, do they feel no anger or unkind temper to the sinner? When they are instructing the ignorant, do they not find any pride, any self-preference? When they are comforting the afflicted, or provoking one another to love and to good works, do they never perceive any inward self-commendation: "*Now you have spoke well?*" Or any vanity, a desire that others should think so, and esteem them on that account? In some or all of these respects, how much sin *cleaves* to the best conversation even of believers? The conviction of which is another branch of repentance, which belongs to them that are justified.

13. And how much sin, if their conscience is thoroughly awake, may they find *cleaving to their actions* also? Nay, are there not many of these, which, though they are such as

the world would not condemn, yet cannot be commended, no, nor excused, if we judge by the word of God? Are there not many of their actions, which, they themselves know, are not to "the glory of God?" Many, wherein they did not even aim at this, which were not undertaken with an eye to God? And of those that were, are there not many, wherein their eye is not singly fixed on God? Wherein they are doing their own will, at least as much, as his, and seeking to please themselves as much, if not more than to please God?—And while they are endeavouring to do good to their neighbour, do they not feel wrong tempers of various kinds? Hence their good actions, so called, are far from being strictly such, being polluted with such a mixture of evil? Such are their works of *mercy!* And is not the same mixture in their works of *piety?* While they are hearing the word, which is able to save their souls, do they not frequently find such thoughts, as make them afraid, lest it should turn to their condemnation rather than their salvation? Is it not often the same case, while they are endeavouring to offer up their prayers to God, whether in public or private? Nay, while they are engaged in the most solemn service: even while they are at the table of the Lord, what manner of thoughts arise in them? Are not their hearts sometimes wandering to the ends of the earth; sometimes filled with such imaginations, as make them fear, lest all their sacrifice should be an abomination to the Lord? So that they are more ashamed of their best duties, than they were once of their worst sins.

14. Again. How many *sins of omission* are they charged with? We know the words of the Apostle, "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." But do they not know a thousand instances, wherein they might have done good, to enemies, to strangers, to their brethren, either with regard to their bodies or their souls, and they did it not? How many omissions have they been guilty of, in their duty towards God! How many opportunities of communicating, of hearing his word, of public or private prayer, have they neglected? So great reason had even that

holy man, Archbishop Usher, after all his labours for God, to cry out, almost with his dying breath, "Lord, forgive me my sins of omission!"

15. But, besides these outward omissions, may they not find in themselves *inward defects* without number? Defects of every kind: they have not the love, the fear, the confidence they ought to have toward God. They have not the love which is due to their neighbour, to every child of man: no, nor even that which is due to their brethren, to every child of God; whether those that are at a distance from them, or those with whom they are immediately connected. They have no holy temper in the degree they ought: they are defective in every thing: in a deep consciousness of which they are ready to cry out with M. De Renty, "I am a ground, all over-run with thorns:" or with Job, "I am vile: I abhor myself, and repent as in dust and ashes."

16. A conviction of their *guiltiness* is another branch of that repentance which belongs to the children of God. But this is cautiously to be understood, and in a peculiar sense. For it is certain, "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," that believe in him, and in the power of that faith, "walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Yet can they no more bear the *strict justice* of God now, than before they believed. This pronounces them to be still *worthy of death*, on all the preceding accounts. And it would absolutely condemn them thereto, were it not for the atoning blood. Therefore they are thoroughly convinced, that they still *deserve* punishment, altho' it is hereby turned aside from them. But here there are extremes on one hand and on the other, and few steer clear of them. Most men strike on one or the other, either thinking themselves condemned, when they are not, or thinking they *deserve* to be acquitted. Nay, the truth lies between: they still *deserve*, strictly speaking, only the damnation of hell. But what they deserve does not come upon them, because they "have an Advocate with the Father." His life, and death, and intercession still interpose between them and condemnation.

17. A conviction of their *utter helplessness*, is yet an-

other branch of this repentance. I mean hereby two things: First, That they are no more now able *of themselves* to think one good thought, to form one good desire, to speak one good word, or do one good work, than before they were justified: that they still have no kind or degree of strength *of their own*, no power either to do good or resist evil: no ability to conquer or even withstand the world, the devil, or their own evil nature. They *can*, it is certain, *do all* these *things;* but it is not by *their own strength*. They have power to overcome all these enemies; for "sin hath no more dominion over *them*." But it is not from nature, either in whole or in part: "it is the *mere* gift of God;" nor is it given all at once, as if they had a stock laid up for many years; but from moment to moment.

18. By this helplessness I mean, Secondly, An absolute inability to deliver ourselves from that guiltiness or desert of punishment whereof we are still conscious: yea, and an inability to remove, by all the grace we have, (to say nothing of our natural powers,) either the pride, self-will, love of the world, anger, and general proneness to "depart from God," which we experimentally know to *remain* in the heart, even of them that are regenerate; or the evil which, in spite of all our endeavours, *cleaves* to all our words and actions. Add to this, an utter inability wholly to avoid *uncharitable*, and much more, *unprofitable conversation:* and an inability to avoid *sins of omission*, or to supply the numberless *defects* we are convinced of, especially the want of love, and other right tempers, both to God and man.

19. If any man is not satisfied of this, if any believes that whoever is justified, is able to remove these sins out of his heart and life, let him make the experiment. Let him try whether, by the grace he has already received, he can expel pride, self-will, or inbred sin in general. Let him try, whether he can cleanse his words and actions from all mixtures of evil; whether he can avoid all uncharitable and unprofitable conversation, with all the sins of omission: and, Lastly, whether he can supply the numberless defects which

he still finds in himself. Let him not be discouraged by one or two experiments, but repeat the trial again and again. And the longer he tries, the more deeply will he be convinced of his utter helplessness in all these respects.

20. Indeed this is so evident a truth, that well nigh all the children of God, scattered abroad, however they differ in other points, yet generally agree in this, that although we may, "by the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body," resist and conquer both outward and inward sin, although we may *weaken* our enemies day by day, yet we cannot *drive them out.* By all the grace which is given at justification, we cannot extirpate them. Though we watch and pray ever so much, we cannot wholly cleanse either our hearts or hands. Most sure we cannot, till it shall please our Lord to speak to our hearts again, to speak the second time, *Be clean.* And then only "the leprosy is cleansed." Then only, the evil root, the carnal mind is destroyed, and inbred sin subsists no more. But if there be no such second change, if there be no instantaneous deliverance after justification, if there be *none but* a gradual work of God, (that there is a gradual work none denies), then we must be content as well as we can, to remain full of sin till death, and, if so, we must remain guilty till death, continually *deserving* punishment. For it is impossible the guilt or desert of punishment should be removed from us, as long as all this sin remains in our hearts, and cleaves to our words and actions. Nay, in rigorous justice, all we think, and speak, and act, continually increases it.

II. 1. In this sense we are to *repent*, after we are justified. And till we do so, we can go no farther. For, till we are sensible of our disease, it admits of no cure. But, supposing we do thus repent, then are we called to "believe the Gospel."

2. And this also is to be understood in a peculiar sense, different from that, wherein we believed in order to justification. Believe the "glad tidings of that great salvation," which God hath prepared for all people. Believe that he who is "the brightness of his Father's glory, the express

image of his person," is "able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God through him." He is able to save you from all the sin that still remains in your heart. He is able to save you from all the sin that cleaves to all your words and actions. He is able to save you from sins of omission, and to supply whatever is wanting in you. It is true, *this is impossible with man; but with God-Man all things are possible.* For what can be too hard for Him, who hath "all power in heaven and in earth?" Indeed his bare power to do this is not a sufficient foundation for our faith, that he will do it, that he will thus exert his power, unless he hath promised it. But this he has done: he has promised it over and over, in the strongest terms. He has given us these "exceeding great and precious promises," both in the Old and the New Testament. So we read in the Law, in the most ancient part of the Oracles of God, "The Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul," Deut. xxx. 6. So in the Psalms, "He shall redeem Israel (the Israel of God) from all their sins." So in the Prophet: "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you: And I will put my Spirit within you, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them. I will also save you from all your uncleannesses," Ezek. xxxvi. 25, &c. So likewise in the New Testament: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited and redeemed his people. And hath raised up a horn of salvation for us,—to perform the oath which he swore to our father Abraham. That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, should serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life;" Luke i. 68, &c.

3. You have therefore good reason to believe, he is not only able, but *willing* to do this, to "cleanse you from all your filthiness of flesh and spirit," to "save you from all your uncleannesses." This is the thing which you now long for; this is the faith which you particularly need, namely,

that the Great Physician, the Lover of my Soul, is willing to *make me clean.* But is he willing to do this to-morrow or to-day? Let him answer for himself. "To-day, if ye will hear my voice, harden not your hearts:" if you put it off till to-morrow, you harden your hearts; you refuse to *hear his voice.* Believe therefore that he is willing to save you *to-day.* He is willing to save you *now.* "Behold, now is the accepted time." He now saith, "Be thou clean!" Only believe; and you also will immediately find, "All things are possible to him that believeth."

4. Continue to believe in him *that loveth* thee, *and gave himself for* thee, that *bore all* thy *sins in his own body on the tree,* and he saveth thee from all condemnation, by his blood continually applied. Thus it is that we continue in a justified state. And when we go on "from faith to faith," when we have faith to be cleansed from indwelling sin, to be saved from all our uncleannesses, we are likewise saved from all that *guilt,* that *desert* of punishment, which we felt before. So that then we may say, not only,

> "Every moment, Lord, I want
> The merit of thy death;"

But, likewise, in the full assurance of faith,

> "Every moment, Lord, I have,
> The merit of thy death!"

For, by that faith in his Life, Death, and Intercession for us, renewed from moment to moment, we are every whit clean, and there is not only now no condemnation for us, but no such desert of punishment as was before, the Lord cleansing both our hearts and lives.

5. By the same faith we feel the power of Christ every moment resting upon us, whereby alone we are what we are; whereby we are enabled to continue in spiritual life, and without which, notwithstanding all our present holiness, we should be devils the next moment. But as long as we retain our faith in him, we "draw water out of the wells of salvation." Leaning on our Beloved, even Christ in us the hope

of glory, who dwelleth in our hearts by faith, who likewise is ever interceding for us at the right hand of God, we receive help from him to think, and speak, and act what is acceptable in his sight. Thus does he "prevent them that believe in all their doings, and further them with his continual help, so that all their designs, conversations, and actions are begun, continued, and ended in him." Thus doth he "cleanse the thoughts of their hearts, by the inspiration of his Holy Spirit, that they may perfectly love him, and worthily magnify his holy name."

6. Thus it is, that in the children of God, Repentance and Faith exactly answer each other. By Repentance we feel the sin remaining in our hearts, and cleaving to our words and actions. By Faith we receive the power of God in Christ, purifying our hearts and cleansing our hands. By Repentance we are still sensible that we deserve punishment for all our tempers, and words, and actions. By Faith we are conscious, that our Advocate with the Father is continually pleading for us, and thereby continually turning aside all condemnation and punishment from us. By Repentance we have an abiding conviction, that there is no help in us. By Faith we receive not only mercy, "but grace to help in *every* time of need." Repentance disclaims the very possibility of any other help. Faith accepts all the help we stand in need of, from Him that hath all power in heaven and earth. Repentance says, "Without him I can do nothing:" Faith says, "I can do all things through Christ strengthening me." Through him I can not only overcome, but expel all the enemies of my soul. Through him I can "love the Lord my God, with all my heart, mind, soul, and strength:" Yea, and "walk in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of my life."

III. 1. From what has been said, we may easily learn the mischievousness of that opinion, that we are *wholly* sanctified when we are justified: that our hearts are then cleansed from all sin. It is true, we are then delivered, as was observed before, from the dominion of outward sin: and at the same time the power of inward sin is so broken,

that we need no longer follow, or be led by it. But it is by no means true, that inward sin is then totally destroyed, that the root of pride, self-will, anger, love of the world, is then taken out of the heart, or that the carnal mind and the heart bent to backsliding are entirely extirpated. And to suppose the contrary, is not, as some may think, an innocent, harmless mistake. No: it does immense harm: it entirely blocks up the way to any farther change: for it is manifest, "They that are whole do not need a physician, but they that are sick." If therefore we think we are quite made whole already, there is no room to seek any farther healing. On this supposition it is absurd to expect a farther deliverance from sin, whether gradual or instantaneous.

2. On the contrary, a deep conviction that we are not yet whole, that our hearts are not fully purified, that there is yet in us a "carnal mind," which is still in its nature "enmity against God;" that a whole body of sin remains in our heart, weakened indeed, but not destroyed, shews beyond all possibility of doubt, the absolute necessity of a farther change. We allow, that at the very moment of justification, we are *born again:* in that instant we experience that inward change, from "darkness into marvellous light;" from the image of the brute and the devil, into the image of God; from the earthly, sensual, devilish mind, to the mind which was in Christ Jesus. But are we then *entirely* changed? Are we *wholly* transformed into the image of him that created us? Far from it: we still retain a depth of sin: and it is the consciousness of this, which constrains us to groan for a full deliverance, to him that is mighty to save. Hence it is, that those believers who are not convinced of the deep corruptions of their hearts, or but slightly, and as it were notionally convinced, have little concern about *entire Sanctification.* They may possibly hold the opinion, that such a thing is to be, either at death, or some time, they know not when, previously thereto. But they have no great uneasiness for the want of it, and no great hunger or thirst after it. They cannot, until they know themselves better, until they repent in the sense above described, until God unveils the inbred

monster's face, and shews them the real state of their souls. Then only, when they feel the burden, will they groan for deliverance from it. Then, and not till then, will they cry out, in the agony of their soul,

"Break off the yoke of inbred sin,
And fully set my spirit free!
I cannot rest, till pure within;
Till I am wholly lost in thee!"

3. We may learn from hence, Secondly, That a deep conviction of our *demerit*, after we are accepted, (which, in one sense, may be termed *guilt*,) is absolutely necessary, in order to our seeing the true value of the atoning blood; in order to our feeling that we need this as much, after we are justified, as ever we did before. Without this conviction we cannot but account the blood of the covenant *as a common thing*, something which we have not now any great need of, seeing all our past sins are blotted out. Yea, but if both our hearts and lives are thus unclean, there is a kind of guilt which we are contracting every moment, and which, of consequence, would every moment expose us to fresh condemnation, but that

"He ever lives above,
For us to intercede,
His all-redeeming love,
His precious blood to plead."

It is this Repentance, and the Faith intimately connected with it, which are expressed in those strong lines,

"I sin in every breath I draw,
Nor do thy will, nor keep thy law,
On earth as angels do above:
But still the fountain open stands,
Washes my feet, my heart, my hands,
Till I am perfected in love."

4. We may observe, Thirdly, a deep conviction of our utter *helplessness*, of our total inability to retain any thing

we have received, much more to deliver ourselves from the world of iniquity remaining both in our hearts and lives, teaches us truly to live upon Christ by faith, not only as our Priest, but as our King. Hereby we are brought to "magnify him," indeed, to "give him all the glory of his grace," to make him a whole Christ, an entire Saviour, and truly to "set the crown upon his head." These excellent words, as they have been frequently used, have little or no meaning. But they are fulfilled in a strong and deep sense, when we thus, as it were, go out of ourselves, in order to be swallowed up in him; when we sink into nothing, that he may be all in all. Then his almighty grace, having abolished "every high thing which exalteth itself against him," every temper, and thought, and word, and work, "is brought to the obedience of Christ."

SERMON XV.

THE GREAT ASSIZE.

Preached at the Assizes held before the Honourable Sir Edward Clive, Knight, one of the Judges of his Majesty's Court of Common-Pleas: in St. Paul's Church, Bedford, on Friday, March 10, 1758.

ROMANS xiv. 10.

"*We shall all stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ.*"

1. HOW many circumstances concur, to raise the awfulness of the present solemnity! The general *concourse* of the people of every age, sex, rank, and condition of life, willingly or unwillingly gathered together, not only from the neighbouring, but from distant parts: *criminals*, speedily to be brought forth, and having no way to escape: *officers*, waiting at their various posts, to execute the orders which shall be given: and the *Representative* of our gracious Sovereign, whom we so highly reverence and honour. The *occasion* likewise of this assembly, adds not a little to the solemnity of it: to hear and determine causes of every kind, some of which are of the most important nature: on which depends no less than life or death; death that uncovers the face of eternity! It was, doubtless, in order to increase the serious sense of these things, and not in the minds of the vulgar only, that the wisdom of our forefathers did not dis-

dain to appoint even several minute circumstances of this solemnity. For these also, by means of the eye or ear, may more deeply affect the heart. And when viewed in this light, trumpets, staves, apparel, are no longer trifling or insignificant, but subservient, in their kind and degree, to the most valuable ends of society.

2. But, as awful as this solemnity is, one far more awful is at hand. For yet, a little while, and "we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ." "For, as I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God." And in that day, "every one of us shall give account of himself to God."

3. Had all men a deep sense of this, how effectually would it secure the interests of society! For what more forcible motive can be conceived, to the practice of genuine morality: to a steady pursuit of solid virtue? And an uniform walking in justice, mercy, and truth? What could strengthen our hands in all that is good, and deter us from all evil, like a strong conviction of this, "the Judge standeth at the door:" and we are shortly to "stand before him?"

4. It may not therefore be improper, or unsuitable to the design of the present assembly, to consider,

I. The chief circumstances which will precede our standing before the Judgment-Seat of Christ:

II. The judgment itself: And,

III. A few of the circumstances which will follow it.

I. Let us, in the first place, consider the chief circumstances which will precede our standing before the judgment seat of Christ.

And, First, "God will shew signs in the earth beneath;"* particularly he will "arise to shake terribly the earth. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be re-

* Acts ii. 10.

moved, like a cottage."* "There shall be earthquakes," κατα τοπους (not in divers only, but) "*in all places;*" not in one only, or a few, but in every part of the habitable world: even "such as were not, since men were upon the earth, so mighty earthquakes and so great."† In one of these "every island shall flee away, and the mountains will not be found."‡ Meantime all the waters of the terraqueous globe will feel the violence of those concussions: "the sea and waves roaring,"§ with such an agitation as had never been known before, since the hour that "the fountains of the great deep were broken up," to destroy the earth, which then stood out of the water and in the water. The air will be all storm and tempest, full of dark vapours and pillars of smoke;‖ resounding with thunder from pole to pole, and torn with ten thousand lightnings. But the commotion will not stop in the region of the air: "the powers of heaven also shall be shaken. There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars;" those fixed, as well as those that move round them. "The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come."¶ "The stars shall withdraw their shining," yea, and "fall from heaven,"** being thrown out of their orbits. And then shall be heard, the universal *shout*, from all the companies of heaven, followed by the "voice of the arch-angel," proclaiming the approach of the Son of God and Man, "and the trumpet of God," sounding an alarm to all that sleep in the dust of the earth.†† In consequence of this all the graves shall open, and the bodies of men arise. "The sea also shall give up the dead which are therein,"‡‡ and every one shall rise with "his own body:" his own in substance, although so changed in its properties, as we cannot now conceive. "For this corruptible will [then] put on incorruption, and this mortal put on immortality."§§

* Isa. xxiv. 20. † Luke xxi. 11. ‡ Rev. xvi. 20. § Luke xxi. 25. ‖ Joel ii. 30. ¶ Ibid. 31. ** Rev. xx. 13. †† 1 Thess. vi. 26. ‡‡ Rev. xv. 13. §§ 1 Cor. xv. 53.

Yea, *death and hades*, the invisible world, shall "deliver up the dead that are in them."* So that all who ever lived and died since God created man, shall be raised incorruptible and immortal.

2. At the same time, "the Son of Man shall send forth his angels over all the earth. And they shall gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." And the Lord himself shall "come with clouds, in his own glory, and the glory of his Father, with ten thousand of his saints, even myriads of angels, and shall sit upon the throne of his glory. And before him shall be gathered all nations, and he shall separate them one from another, and shall set the sheep [the good] on his right hand, and the goats [the wicked] upon the left."† Concerning this general assembly it is, that the beloved disciple speaks thus: "I saw the dead, [all that had been dead], small and great, stand before God. And the books were opened," (a figurative expression, plainly referring to the manner of proceeding among men), and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works."‡

II. These are the chief circumstances which are recorded in the oracles of God, as preceding the General Judgment. We are, Secondly, to consider the judgment itself, so far as it hath pleased God to reveal it.

1. The Person by whom God will judge the world is his only begotten Son, whose "goings forth are from everlasting, who is God over all, blessed for ever." Unto him, being "the out-beaming of his Father's glory, the express image of his person,"§ the Father "hath committed all judgment, because he is the Son of Man:"‖ because, though he was "in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, yet he emptied himself, taking upon him the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men."¶ Yea, because "being found in fashion as a man, he hum-

* Rev. xx. 13. † Matt. xxv. 31. ‡ Rev. xx. 12. § Heb. i. 3. ‖ John v. 22, 27. ¶ Phil. ii. 6, 7.

bled himself, [yet farther] becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God hath highly exalted him," even in his human nature, and "ordained him," as man, to try the children of men, "to be the Judge, both of the quick and dead;" both of those who shall be found alive at his coming, and of those who were before gathered to their fathers.

2. The time, termed by the Prophet, "the great and the terrible Day," is usually, in Scripture, stiled *The Day of the Lord.* The space from the creation of man upon the earth, to the end of all things, is "the day of the sons of men:" the time that is now passing over us, is properly *our day.* When this is ended, "the Day of the Lord" will begin. But who can say how long it will continue? "With the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."* And from this very expression, some of the ancient Fathers drew that inference, that, what is commonly called "the Day of Judgment," would be indeed a thousand years. And it seems they did not go beyond the truth: nay, probably they did not come up to it. For, if we consider the number of persons who are to be judged, and of actions which are to be enquired into, it does not appear, that a thousand years will suffice for the transactions of that day. So that it may not improbably comprise several thousand years. But God shall reveal this also in its season.

3. With regard to the place where mankind will be judged, we have no explicit account in Scripture. An eminent writer, (but not he alone; many have been of the same opinion), supposes it will be on earth, where the works were done, according to which they shall be judged; and that God will, in order thereto, employ the Angels of his strength,—

"To smooth and lengthen out the boundless space,
And spread an area for all human race."

* Pet. iii. 8.

But, perhaps, it is more agreeable to our Lord's own account, of his coming in the clouds, to suppose it will be above the earth, if not "twice a planetary height." And this supposition is not a little favoured, by what St. Paul writes to the Thessalonians: "The dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who remain alive, shall be caught up together with them, in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air," Thes. iv. 16, 17. So that it seems most probable, the great white Throne will be high exalted above the earth.

4. The persons to be judged, who can count, any more than the drops of rain, or the sands of the sea? "I beheld (said St. John) a great multitude, which no man can number, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands." How immense then must be the total multitude, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues; of all that have sprung from the loins of Adam, since the world began, till time shall be no more! If we admit the common supposition, which seems no ways absurd, that the earth bears, at any one time, no less than eight hundred millions, of living souls, men, women, and children, what a congregation must all those generations make, who have succeeded each other for seven thousand years!

"Great Xerxes' world in arms, proud Cannæ's host,
They all are here; and here they all are lost.
Their numbers swell to be discern'd in vain;
Lost as a drop in the unbounded main."

Every man, every woman, every infant of days that ever breathed the vital air, will then hear the voice of the Son of God, and start into life, and appear before him. And this seems to be the natural import of that expression, "the dead, small and great:" all universally, all without exception, all of every age, sex, or degree; all that ever lived and died, or underwent such a change as will be equivalent with death. For long before that day, the phantom of human greatness disappears, and sinks into nothing! Even in the moment of death, that vanishes away. Who is rich or great in the grave?

5. And every man shall there "give an account of his own works;" yea, a full and true account of all that he ever did while in the body, whether it was good or evil. O what a scene will then be disclosed, in the sight of angels and men! While not the fabled Rhadamanthus, but the Lord God Almighty, who knoweth all things in heaven and in earth,—

> "Castigatque auditque dolos: subigitque fateri
> Quæ quis apud superos, furto lætatus inani,
> Distulit in seram commissa piacula mortem."

Nor will all the actions alone of every child of man, be then brought to open view, but all their words: seeing "every idle word which men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment," Matt. xii. 36, 37. So that "by thy words," as well as works, "thou shalt be justified; and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." Will not God then bring to light every circumstance also, that accompanied every word or action, and if not altered the nature, yet lessened or increased the goodness or badness of them? And how easy is this to Him, who is "about our bed, and about our path, and spieth out all our ways?" We know, "the darkness is no darkness to Him, but the night shineth as the day."

6. Yea, he will bring *to* light, not the hidden works of darkness only, but the very thoughts and intents of the heart. And what marvel? For he "searcheth the reins and understandeth all our thoughts. All things are naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do!" "Hell and destruction are before him without a covering! How much more the hearts of the children of men!"

7. And in that day shall be discovered every inward working of every human soul: every appetite, passion, inclination, affection, with the various combinations of them, with every temper and disposition that constitutes the whole complex character of each individual. So shall it be clearly and infallibly seen, who was righteous, and who unright-

eous; and in what degree every action, or person, or character, was either good or evil.

8. "Then the King will say to them upon his right-hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father. For I was hungry and ye gave me meat, thirsty and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger and ye took me in; naked and ye clothed me." In like manner, all the good they did upon earth will be recited before men and angels: whatsoever they had done, either in word or deed, in the Name, or for the Sake, of the Lord Jesus. All their good desires, intentions, thoughts, all their holy dispositions, will also be then remembered; and it will appear, that though they were unknown or forgotten among men, yet God noted them in his Book. All their sufferings likewise for the Name of Jesus, and for the testimony of a good conscience, will be displayed, unto their praise, from the righteous Judge, their honour before saints and angels, and the increase of that "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

9. But will their evil deeds too, (since, if we take in his whole life, there is not a man on earth that liveth and sinneth not), will these be remembered in that Day, and mentioned in the great Congregation? Many believe they will not, and ask, "Would not this imply, that their sufferings were not at an end, even when life ended? Seeing they would still have sorrow, and shame, and confusion of face to endure?" They ask farther, "How can this be reconciled with God's declaration by the Prophet, 'If the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right; all his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be once mentioned unto him;' Ezek. xviii. 21, 22. How is it consistent with the promise which God has made to all who accept of the gospel-covenant, 'I will forgive their iniquities, and remember their sins no more?' Jer. xxxi. 34. Or, as the Apostle expresses it, 'I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more?'" Heb. viii. 12.

10. It may be answered, It is apparently and absolutely

necessary, for the full display of the glory of God, for the clear and perfect manifestation of his Wisdom, Justice, Power, and Mercy, toward the heirs of salvation, that all the circumstances of their life should be placed in open view, together with all their tempers, and all the desires, thoughts, and intents of their hearts: otherwise, how would it appear out of what a depth of sin and misery the grace of God had delivered them? And, indeed, if the whole lives of all the children of men were not manifestly discovered, the whole amazing contexture of Divine Providence could not be manifested: nor should we yet be able in a thousand instances, "To justify the ways of God to man." Unless our Lord's words were fulfilled in their utmost sense, without any restriction or limitation, "There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, or hid that shall not be known," Mat. x. 26; abundance of God's dispensations under the sun would still appear without their reasons. And then only when God hath brought to light all the hidden things of darkness, whosoever were the actors therein, will it be seen that wise and good were all his ways: that he saw through the thick cloud, and governed all things by the wise counsel of his own Will: that nothing was left to chance or the caprice of men, but God disposed all strongly and sweetly, and wrought all into one connected chain of Justice, Mercy, and Truth.

11. And in the discovery of the divine perfections, the righteous will rejoice with joy unspeakable; far from feeling any painful sorrow or shame, for any of those past transgressions which were long since blotted out as a cloud, washed away by the blood of the Lamb. It will be abundantly sufficient for them, that all the transgressions which they had committed, shall not be once mentioned unto them, to their disadvantage; that their sins, and transgressions, and iniquities shall be remembered no more, to their condemnation. This is the plain meaning of the promise: and this all the children of God shall find true, to their everlasting comfort.

12. After the righteous are judged, the King will turn to

them upon his left-hand, and they shall also be judged, every man according to his works. But not only their outward works will be brought into the account, but all the evil words which they have ever spoken; yea, all the evil desires, affections, tempers, which have had a place in their souls; and all the evil thoughts or designs which were ever cherished in their hearts. The joyful sentence of acquital will then be pronounced upon those upon the right-hand: the dreadful sentence of condemnation upon those on the left: both of which must remain fixed and unmovable, as the Throne of God.

III. 1. We may, in the Third place, consider a few of the Circumstances which will follow the General Judgment. And the first is the execution of the sentence pronounced on the evil and on the good: "These shall go away into eternal punishment, and the righteous into life eternal." It should be observed, it is the very same word which is used, both in the former and latter clause: it follows, that either the punishment lasts for ever, or the reward too will come to an end; which certainly it never will, unless God could come to an end, or his mercy and truth could fail: "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father, and shall drink of those rivers of pleasure which are at God's right-hand for evermore." But here all description falls short: all human language fails! Only one who is caught up into the third heaven can have a just conception of it. But even such a one cannot express what he hath seen: these things it is not possible for man to utter.

The wicked, mean-time, shall be turned into hell, even all the people that forget God. They will be "punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." They will be "cast into the lake of fire burning with brimstone," originally "prepared for the devil and his angels;" where they will gnaw their tongues for anguish and pain, they will curse God and look upward: there the dogs of hell, pride, malice, revenge, rage, horror, despair, continually devour them. "There they have no rest, day or night, but the smoke of their tor-

ment ascendeth up for ever and ever. For their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched."

2. Then the heavens will be shriveled up as a parchment scroll, and pass away with a great noise: they will "flee from the face of Him that sitteth on the Throne, and there will be found no place for them," Rev. xx. 11. The very manner of their passing away is disclosed to us by the Apostle Peter: "In the Day of God, the heavens being on fire, shall be dissolved," 2 Pet. iii. 12. The whole beautiful fabric will be overthrown by that raging element, the connection of all its parts destroyed, and every atom torn asunder from the others. By the same, "The earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up," ver. 10. The enormous works of nature, the everlasting hills, mountains that have defied the rage of time, and stood unmoved so many thousand years, will sink down in fiery ruin. How much less will the works of art, though of the most durable kind, the utmost efforts of human industry, tombs, pillars, triumphal arches, castles, pyramids, be able to withstand the flaming conqueror! All, all will die, perish, vanish away, like a dream when one awaketh!

3. It has indeed been imagined by some great and good men, that as it requires that same Almighty Power to annihilate things as to create, to speak into nothing or out of nothing: so no part of, no atom in the universe, will be totally or finally destroyed. Rather, they suppose, that, as the last operation of fire, which we have yet been able to observe, is to reduce into glass, what, by a smaller force, it had reduced to ashes: so, in the day God hath ordained, the whole earth, if not the material heavens also, will undergo this change, after which the fire can have no farther power over them. And they believe this is intimated by that expression in the Revelation made to St. John, "Before the Throne there was a sea of glass, like unto crystal," Rev. iv. 6. We cannot now either affirm or deny this: but we shall know hereafter.

4. If it be enquired by the scoffers, the minute philosophers, How can these things be? Whence should come such

an immense quantity of fire as would consume the heavens and the whole terraqueous globe? We would beg leave, first, to remind them, that this difficulty is not peculiar to the Christian system. The same opinion almost universally obtained among the *unbigotted* heathens. So one of those celebrated *free-thinkers* speaks according to the generally received sentiment;

> "Esse quoque in fatis reminiscitur, affore tempus,
> Quo mare, quo tellus, correptaque regia cœli
> Ardeat, et mundi moles operosa laboret."

But, Secondly, it is easy to answer, even from our slight and superficial acquaintance with natural things, that there are abundant magazines of fire ready prepared, and treasured up against the Day of the Lord. How soon may a comet, commissioned by him, travel down from the most distant parts of the universe! And were it to fix upon the earth, in its return from the sun, when it is some thousand times hotter than a red-hot cannon-ball, who does not see what must be the immediate consequence? But, not to ascend so high as the ethereal heavens, might not the same lightnings which "give shine to the world," if commanded by the Lord of Nature, give ruin and utter destruction? Or, to go no farther than the globe itself: who knows what huge reservoirs of liquid fire are from age to age contained in the bowels of the earth? Ætna, Hecla, Vesuvius, and all the other volcanos that belch out flames and coals of fire, what are they, but so many proofs and mouths of those fiery furnaces? And at the same time so many evidences, that God hath in readiness wherewith to fulfil his word? Yea, were we to observe no more than the surface of the earth, and the things that surround us on every side, it is most certain (as a thousand experiments prove, beyond all possibility of denial) that we ourselves, our whole bodies, are full of fire, as well as every thing round about us. Is it not easy to make this ethereal fire visible to the naked eye? And to produce thereby the very same effects on combustible matter, which are produced by culinary fire? Needs there then any

more than for God to unloose that secret chain, whereby this irresistible agent is now bound down, and lies quiescent in every particle of matter? And how soon would it tear the universal frame in pieces, and involve all in one common ruin!

5. There is one circumstance more which will follow the Judgment, that deserves our serious consideration. "We look (says the Apostle) according to his promise, for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness," 2 Pet. iii. 13. The promise stands in the prophecy of Isaiah, "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth. And the former shall not be remembered," Isaiah lxv. 17: so great shall the glory of the latter be! These St. John did behold in the Visions of God. "I saw (saith he) a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away," Rev. xx. 1. And only righteousness dwelt therein: accordingly he adds, "And I heard a great voice from [the third] heaven, saying, 'Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God!'" ch. xxi. 3. Of necessity therefore they will all be happy: "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain," ch. xxi. 4. "There shall be no more curse; but they shall see his face," ch. xxii. 3, 4; shall have the nearest access to, and thence the highest resemblance of him. This is the strongest expression in the language of Scripture, to denote the most perfect happiness. "And his Name shall be on their foreheads;" they shall be openly acknowledged as God's own property; and his glorious nature shall most visibly shine forth in them. "And there shall be no night there, and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light; and they shall reign for ever and ever."

IV. It remains only, to apply the preceding considerations to all who are here before God. And are we not directly led so to do, by the present solemnity, which so

naturally points us to that Day, when the Lord will judge the world in righteousness? This, therefore, by reminding us of that more awful season, may furnish many lessons of instruction. A few of these I may be permitted just to touch on. May God write them on all our hearts!

1. And, first, how beautiful are the feet of those who are sent by the wise and gracious Providence of God, to execute justice on earth, to defend the injured, and punish the wrong-doer! Are they not the Ministers of God to us for good, the grand Supporters of the public tranquillity, the Patrons of innocence and virtue, the great Security of all our temporal blessings? And does not every one of these represent, not only an earthly prince, but the Judge of the earth? Him, whose "Name is written upon his Thigh, King of kings, and Lord of lords?" O that all these sons of the right-hand of the Most High, may be holy as he is holy! Wise with the Wisdom that sitteth by his Throne, like him who is the eternal Wisdom of the Father! No respecters of persons, as he is none; but rendering to every man according to his works: like him inflexibly, inexorably just, though pitiful and of tender mercy! So shall they be terrible indeed to them that do evil, as not bearing the sword in vain. So shall the Laws of our land have their full use and due honour, and the Throne of our King be still established in righteousness.

2. Ye truly honourable men, whom God and the King have commissioned, in a lower degree, to administer Justice: may not ye be compared to those ministering spirits who will attend the Judge coming in the clouds? May you, like them, burn with love to God and man! May you love righteousness and hate iniquity! May ye all minister in your several spheres (such honour hath God given you also!) to them that shall be heirs of salvation, and to the glory of your great Sovereign! May ye remain the Establishers of Peace, the Blessing and Ornaments of your Country, the Protectors of a guilty land, the Guardian Angels of all that are round about you!

3. You, whose office it is to execute what is given you

in charge by Him, before whom you stand; how nearly are you concerned to resemble those that stand before the face of the Son of Man? Those servants of his that do his pleasure, and hearken to the voice of his words? Does it not highly import you, to be as uncorrupt as they? To approve yourselves the servants of God? To do justly, and love mercy; to do to all as ye would they should do to you? So shall that great Judge, under whose eye you continually stand, say to you also, "Well done, good and faithful servants: enter ye into the joy of your Lord!"

4. Suffer me to add a few words to all of you who are this day present before the Lord. Should not you bear it in your minds all the day long, that a more awful day is coming? A large assembly this! But what is it to that which every eye will then behold, the general assembly of all the children of men that ever lived on the face of the whole earth! A few will stand at the judgment-seat this day, to be judged, touching what shall be laid to their charge. And they are now reserved in prison, perhaps in chains, till they are brought forth to be tried and sentenced. But we shall all, I that speak, and you that hear, "Stand at the Judgment-seat of Christ!" And we are now reserved on this earth, which is not our home, in this prison of flesh and blood, perhaps many of us in chains of darkness too, till we are ordered to be brought forth. Here a man is questioned concerning one or two facts, which he is supposed to have committed. There we are to give an account of all our works, from the cradle to the grave; of all our words, of all our desires and tempers; all the thoughts and intents of our hearts; of all the use we have made of our various talents, whether of mind, body, or fortune, till God said, "Give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward." In this court, it is possible some, who are guilty, may escape for want of evidence. But there is no want of evidence in that court. All men, with whom you had the most secret intercourse, who were privy to all your designs and actions, are ready before your face. So are all the spirits of darkness, who inspired evil designs, and as-

sisted in the execution of them. So are all the angels of God, those eyes of the Lord, that run to and fro over all the earth, who watched over your souls, and laboured for your good, so far as you would permit. So is your own conscience, a thousand witnesses in one, now no more capable of being either blinded or silenced, but constrained to know and to speak the naked truth, touching all your thoughts, and words, and actions. And is conscience as a thousand witnesses? yea, but God is as a thousand consciences! Oh, who can stand before the face of the great God, even our Saviour Jesus Christ!

See! see! He cometh! He maketh the clouds his chariots! He rideth upon the wings of the wind! A devouring fire goeth before him, and after him, a flame burneth! See! he sitteth upon his throne, clothed with light as with a garment, arrayed with majesty and honour! Behold his eyes are as a flame of fire, his voice as the sound of many waters!

How will ye escape? Will ye call to the mountains to fall on you, the rocks to cover you? Alas, the mountains themselves, the rocks, the earth, the heavens, are just ready to flee away! Can ye prevent the sentence? Wherewith? With all the substance of thy house, with thousands of gold and silver? Blind wretch! Thou camest naked from thy mother's womb, and more naked into eternity. Hear the Lord, the Judge! "Come, ye blessed of my Father! inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Joyful sound! How widely different from that voice, which echoes through the expanse of heaven, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels!" And, who is he that can prevent or retard the full execution of either sentence? Vain hope! Lo, hell is moved from beneath to receive those who are ripe for destruction! And the everlasting doors lift up their heads, that the heirs of glory may come in.

5. "What manner of persons then ought we to be, in all holy conversation and godliness!" We know it cannot be long before the Lord will descend with the voice of the Archangel, and the trumpet of God; when every one of us

shall appear before him, and give an account of his own works. "Wherefore, beloved, seeing ye look for these things; [seeing ye know, He will come and will not tarry] be diligent that ye may be found of him, in peace, without spot and blameless." Why should ye not? Why should one of you be found on the left hand, at his appearing? He willeth not that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance; by repentance to faith, in a bleeding Lord; by faith, to spotless love, to the full image of God, renewed in the heart, and producing all holiness of conversation. Can you doubt of this, when you remember the Judge of all, is likewise the Saviour of all? Hath he not bought you with his own blood, that ye might not perish, but have everlasting life? O make proof of his mercy rather than his justice! Of his love rather than the thunder of his power! He is not far from every one of us: and he is now come, not to condemn, but to save the world. He standeth in the midst! Sinner, doth he not now, even now, knock at the door of thy heart? O that thou mayest know, at least in this thy day, the things that belong unto thy peace! O that ye may now give yourselves to him who gave himself for you, in humble faith, in holy, active, patient love! so shall ye rejoice with exceeding joy in his day, when he cometh in the clouds of heaven.

SERMON XVI.

THE MEANS OF GRACE.

MALACHI iii. 7.

"*Ye have gone away from mine Ordinances, and have not kept them.*"

I. 1. BUT are there any *Ordinances* now, since life and immortality were brought to light by the gospel? Are there under the Christian dispensation, any *Means* ordained of God, as the usual channels of his grace? This question could never have been proposed, in the Apostolical Church, unless by one who openly avowed himself to be an Heathen; the whole body of Christians being agreed, that Christ had ordained certain outward means, for conveying his grace into the souls of men. Their constant practice set this beyond all dispute; for so long as "all that believed were together, and had all things common," Acts ii. 44: "they continued steadfastly in the teaching of the Apostles, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers," ver. 42.

2. But in process of time, when "the love of many waxed cold," some began to mistake the *means* for the *end*, and to place Religion, rather in doing those outward works, than in a heart renewed after the image of God. They forgot, that "the end of every commandment is love, out of a pure heart, with faith unfeigned:" the loving the Lord their

God with all their heart, and their neighbour as themselves; and the being purified from pride, anger, and evil desire, by a "faith of the operation of God." Others seemed to imagine, that though Religion did not principally consist in these outward means, yet there was something in them wherewith God was well pleased, something that would still make them acceptable in his sight, though they were not exact in the weightier matters of the law, in Justice, Mercy, and the Love of God.

3. It is evident, in those who abused them thus, they did not conduce to the end for which they were ordained. Rather, the things which should have been for their health, were to them an occasion of falling. They were so far from receiving any blessing therein, that they only drew down a curse upon their head: so far from growing more heavenly in heart and life, that they were two-fold more the children of hell than before. Others clearly perceiving, that these means did not convey the grace of God to those children of the devil, began from this particular case to draw a general conclusion, "That they were not means of conveying the grace of God."

4. Yet the number of those who *abused* the ordinances of God was far greater than of those who *despised* them, till certain men arose, not only of great understanding, (sometimes joined with considerable learning), but who likewise appeared to be men of love, experimentally acquainted with true, inward Religion. Some of these were burning and shining lights, persons famous in their generations, and such as had well deserved of the Church of Christ, for standing in the gap against the overflowings of ungodliness.

It cannot be supposed, that these holy and venerable men, intended any more at first, than to shew that outward Religion is nothing worth, without the Religion of the heart: that God "is a Spirit, and they who worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth." That therefore external worship is lost labour, without a heart devoted to God: that the outward ordinances of God then profit much, when they

advance inward holiness, but when they advance it not, are unprofitable and void, are lighter than vanity: yea, that when they are used, as it were, *in the place* of this, they are an utter abomination to the Lord.

5. Yet it is not strange, if some of these, being strongly convinced, of that horrid profanation of the ordinances of God, which had spread itself over the whole Church, and well nigh driven true Religion out of the world, in their fervent zeal for the glory of God, and the recovery of souls from that fatal delusion, spake, as if outward Religion were *absolutely nothing*, as if it had *no* place in the Religion of Christ. It is not surprising at all, if they should not always have expressed themselves with sufficient caution. So that unwary hearers might believe they condemned all outward means, as altogether unprofitable; and as not designed of God to be the ordinary channels of conveying his grace into the souls of men.

Nay, it is not impossible, some of these holy men did, at length, themselves fall into this opinion: in particular, those who, not by choice, but by the Providence of God, were cut off from all these ordinances: perhaps wandering up and down, having no certain abiding-place, or dwelling in dens and caves of the earth. These experiencing the grace of God in themselves, though they were deprived of all outward means, might infer, that the same grace would be given to them, who of set purpose abstained from them.

6. And Experience shews, how easily this notion spreads, and insinuates itself into the minds of men: especially of those who are thoroughly awakened out of the sleep of death, and begin to feel the weight of their sins, a burthen too heavy to be borne. These are usually impatient of their present state, and trying every way to escape from it. They are always ready to catch at any new proposal of ease or happiness. They have probably tried most outward means, and found no ease in them: it may be, more and more of remorse, and fear, and sorrow, and condemnation. It is easy therefore to persuade these, that it is better for them to abstain from all those means. They are already weary of striv-

ing (as it seems) in vain, of labouring in the fire: and are therefore glad of any pretence to cast aside that wherein their soul has no pleasure; to give over the painful strife, and sink down into an indolent inactivity.

II. 1. In the following Discourse, I propose to examine at large, Whether there are any Means of Grace?

By *Means of Grace* I understand outward signs, words, or actions, ordained of God, and appointed for this end, to be the ordinary channels whereby he might convey to men, preventing, justifying, or sanctifying grace.

I use this expression, "Means of Grace," because I know none better, and because it has been generally used in the Christian Church for many ages: in particular, by our own Church, which directs us to bless God, both for the "Means of grace," and hopes of glory; and teaches us that a Sacrament is, "An outward sign of inward *grace*, and a *means* whereby we receive the same."

The chief of these means are prayer, whether in secret or with the great congregation; searching the Scriptures, (which implies reading, hearing, and meditating thereon); and receiving the Lord's-Supper, eating bread and drinking wine in remembrance of Him: and these we believe to be ordained of God, as the ordinary channels of conveying his grace to the souls of men.

2. But we allow, That the whole value of the means depends on their actual subservience to the end of Religion; that consequently all these means, when separate from the end, are less than nothing and vanity; that if they do not actually conduce to the knowledge and love of God, they are not acceptable in his sight: yea, rather, they are an abomination before him; a stink in his nostrils; he is weary to bear them. Above all, if they are used as a kind of *Commutation* for the Religion they were designed to subserve; it is not easy to find words for the enormous folly and wickedness, of thus turning God's arm against himself; of keeping Christianity out of the heart by those very means which were ordained for the bringing it in.

3. We allow, likewise, that all outward means whatever,

if separate from the Spirit of God, cannot profit at all, cannot conduce, in any degree, either to the knowledge or love of God. Without controversy, the help that is done upon earth, He doth it himself. It is He alone who by his own Almighty Power, worketh in us what is pleasing in his sight. And all outward things, unless he work in them and by them, are mere weak and beggarly elements. Whosoever therefore imagines, there is any intrinsic power, in any means whatsoever, does greatly err, not knowing the Scriptures, neither the power of God. We know that there is no inherent power in the words that are spoken in prayer, in the letter of Scripture read, the sound thereof heard, or the bread and wine received in the Lord's-Supper: but that it is God alone who is the Giver of every good gift, the Author of all grace; that the whole power is of him, whereby, through any of these, there is any blessing conveyed to our souls. We know, likewise, that he is able to give the same grace though there were no means on the face of the earth. In this sense, we may affirm, that, "with regard to God, there is no such thing as means: seeing he is equally able to work whatsoever pleaseth him, by any, or by none at all."

4. We allow farther, That the use of all means whatever, will never atone for one sin; that it is the blood of Christ alone, whereby any sinner can be reconciled to God; there being no other propitiation for our sins, no other fountain for sin and uncleanness. Every believer in Christ is deeply convinced that there is no *merit* but in Him: that there is no *merit* in any of his own works; not in uttering the prayer, or searching the Scriptures, or hearing the Word of God, or eating of that bread and drinking of that cup. So that if no more be intended by the expression some have used, "Christ is the only means of grace," than this, That he is the only *meritorious cause* of it, it cannot be gainsaid by any who know the grace of God.

5. Yet once more. We allow, though it is a melancholy truth, that a large proportion of those who are called Christians, do to this day abuse the means of grace, to the de-

struction of their souls. This is doubtless the case with all those who rest content, in the form of godliness without the power. Either they fondly presume they are Christians already, because they do thus and thus; although Christ was never yet revealed in their hearts, nor the love of God shed abroad therein: or else they suppose, they shall infallibly be so, barely because they use these means: idly dreaming, (though perhaps hardly conscious thereof), either that there is some kind of *power* therein, whereby, sooner or later, (they know not when), they shall certainly be made holy: or that there is a sort of *merit* in using them, which will surely move God to give them holiness, or accept them without it.

6. So little do they understand that great foundation of the whole Christian building, "By grace ye are saved." Ye are saved from your sins, from the guilt and power thereof, ye are restored to the favour and image of God, not for any works, *merits*, or deservings of yours, but by the free *grace*, the mere mercy of God, through the *merits* of his well-beloved Son. Ye are thus saved, not by any *power*, wisdom, or strength, which is in you, or in any other creature; but merely through the grace or *power* of the Holy Ghost, which worketh all in all.

7. But the main question remains. We know this salvation is the gift and the work of God. But how (may one say, who is convinced he hath it not) may I attain thereto? If you say, "Believe and thou shalt be saved:" he answers, True; but how shall I believe? You reply, Wait upon God. Well; but how am I to wait? In the means of grace, or out of them? Am I to wait for the grace of God which bringeth salvation, by using these means, or by laying them aside?

8. It cannot possibly be conceived, that the Word of God should give no direction in so important a point: or that the Son of God, who came down from heaven for us men and for our salvation, should have left us undetermined with regard to a question, wherein our salvation is so nearly concerned.

And, in fact, he hath not left us undetermined; he hath shewn us the way wherein we should go. We have only to consult the Oracles of God, to enquire what is written there? And if we simply abide by their decision, there can no possible doubt remain.

III. 1. According to this, according to the decision of holy Writ, all who desire the grace of God, are to wait for it, in the means which he hath ordained; in using, not laying them aside.

And, first: all who desire the grace of God are to wait for it in the way of *Prayer*. This is the express direction of our Lord himself. In his Sermon on the Mount, after explaining at large, wherein Religion consists, and describing the main branches of it, he adds, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened," Matt. vii. 7, 8. Here we are in the plainest manner directed to ask, in order to, or a mean of, receiving; to seek, in order to find, the grace of God, the pearl of great price; and to knock, to continue asking and seeking, if we would enter into his kingdom.

2. That no doubt might remain, our Lord labours this point in a more peculiar manner. He appeals to every man's own heart. "What man is there of you, who, if his son ask bread, will give him a stone? Or, if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven," the Father of angels and men, the Father of the spirits of all flesh, "give good things to them that ask him?" ver. 9—11. Or, as he expresses himself on another occasion, including all good things in one, "How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" Luke xi. 13. It should be particularly observed here, that the persons directed to ask, had not then received the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless our Lord directs them to use this mean, and promises that it should

be effectual; that upon asking they should receive the Holy Spirit, from him whose mercy is over all his works.

3. The absolute necessity of using this mean, if we would receive any gift from God, yet farther appears from that remarkable passage which immediately precedes these words: "And he said unto them," whom he had just been teaching how to pray, "which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and shall say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves: and he from within shall answer, Trouble me not; I cannot rise and give thee: I say unto you, though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet, because of his importunity, he will rise, and give him as many as he needeth. And I say unto you, Ask and it shall be given you," Luke xi. 5, 7, 8, 9. "Though he will not give him, because he is his friend, yet, because of his importunity, he will rise and give him as many as he needeth." How could our blessed Lord more plainly declare, That we may receive of God, by this mean, by importunately asking, what otherwise we shall not receive at all.

4. "He spake also another parable to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint," till through this mean they should receive of God, whatsoever petition they asked of him. "There was in a city a Judge who feared not God, neither regarded man. And there was a widow in that city, and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of my adversary. And he would not for awhile; but afterwards he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man, yet, because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest, by her continual coming, she weary me," Luke xviii. 1—4. The application of this our Lord himself hath made. "Hear what the unjust Judge saith!" Because she continues to ask, because she will take no denial, therefore I will avenge her. "And shall not God avenge his own elect, who cry day and night unto him? I tell you he will avenge them speedily," if they *pray and faint not*.

5. A direction equally full and express, to wait for the blessings of God in private prayer, together with a positive

promise, that, by this mean, we shall obtain the request of our lips, he hath given us in those well-known words: "Enter into thy closet; and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly," Matt. vi. 6.

6. If it be possible for any direction to be more clear, it is that which God hath given us by the Apostle, with regard to prayer of every kind, public or private, and the blessing annexed thereto. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally," (if they ask; "otherwise *ye have not, because ye ask not*, Jam. iv. 2), "and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him," chap. i. 5.

If it be objected, "But this is no direction to unbelievers; to them who know not the pardoning grace of God: for the Apostle adds, "But let him ask in faith; otherwise, let him not think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord." I answer, The meaning of the word *faith* in this place, is fixed by the Apostle himself, as if it were on purpose to obviate this objection, in the words immediately following: *Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering*, nothing *doubting*, μηδεν διακρινομενος. Not doubting but God heareth his prayer, and will fulfil the desire of his heart.

The gross, blasphemous absurdity of supposing *faith* in this place to be taken in the full Christian meaning, appears hence: it is supposing the Holy Ghost to direct a man who knows he has not this faith (which is here termed *wisdom*) to ask it of God, with a positive promise that *it shall be given him:* and then immediately to subjoin, That it shall not be given him, unless he have it before he asks for it. But who can bear such a supposition? From this scripture, therefore, as well as those cited above, we must infer, that all who desire the grace of God, are to wait for it in the way of prayer.

7. Secondly, All who desire the grace of God are to wait for it in *searching the Scriptures.*

Our Lord's direction, with regard to the use of this mean, is likewise plain and clear. "Search the Scriptures," saith

he to the unbelieving Jews, "for they testify of me," John v. 39. And for this very end did he direct them to search the Scriptures, that they might "believe in him."

The objection, "That this is not a command, but only an assertion, that they did search the Scriptures," is shamelessly false. I desire those who urge it, to let us know, how a command can be more clearly expressed, than in those terms, Ερευνατε τας γραφας. It is as peremptory as so many words can make it.

And what a blessing from God attends the use of this mean, appears from what is recorded concerning the Bereans; who, after hearing St. Paul, "searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so? Therefore, many of them believed;" found the grace of God, in the way which he had ordained, Acts xvii. 12, 13.

It is probable, indeed, that in some of those who had "received the word with all readiness of mind," *faith came* (as the same apostle speaks) *by hearing*, and was only confirmed by *reading* the Scriptures. But it was observed above, that under the general term of "searching the Scriptures," both hearing, reading, and meditating are contained.

8. And that this is a mean whereby God not only gives, but also confirms and increases true wisdom, we learn from the words of Paul to Timothy: "From a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, thro' faith which is in Christ Jesus," 2 Tim. iii. 15. The same truth (namely, that this is the great mean God has ordained for conveying his manifold grace to man) is delivered, in the fullest manner that can be conceived, in the words which immediately follow: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God; [consequently, all Scripture is infallibly true]; and it is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; to the end that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works," ver. 16, 17.

9. It should be observed, that this is spoken primarily and directly, of the Scriptures which Timothy had *known*

from a child; which must have been those of the Old Testament, for the New was not then written. How far then was St. Paul (though he was "not a whit behind the very chief of the Apostles," nor, therefore, I presume, behind any man now upon earth) from making light of the Old Testament! Behold this, lest ye one day "wonder and perish," ye who make so small account of one half of the Oracles of God! Yea, and that half, of which the Holy Ghost expressly declares, that it is *profitable*, as a mean ordained of God, for this very thing, "for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: to the end the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

10. Nor is this profitable only for the men of God, for those who walk already in the light of his countenance; but also for those who are yet in darkness, seeking him whom they know not. Thus St. Peter, "we have also a more sure word of prophecy:" literally, "and we have the prophetic word more sure:" Και εχομεν βεβαιοτερον τον προφητικον λογον, confirmed by our being "eye-witnesses of his Majesty," and "hearing the voice which came from the excellent glory," "unto which [prophetic word; so he stiles the holy Scriptures] ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the Day-star arise in your hearts," 2 Pet. i. 19. Let all, therefore, who desire that day to dawn upon their hearts, wait for it in "searching the Scriptures."

11. Thirdly, All who desire an increase of the grace of God, are to wait for it in partaking of the Lord's-Supper. For this also is a direction himself hath given. "The same night in which he was betrayed, he took bread, and brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body," that is, the sacred sign of my body, "this do, in remembrance of me. Likewise, he took the cup, saying, This cup is the New Testament," or covenant, in my blood, the sacred sign of that covenant "this do ye, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew forth the Lord's death till he come," 1 Cor. xi. 23, &c.

Ye openly exhibit the same, by these visible signs, before God, and angels, and men. Ye manifest your solemn remembrance of his death, till he cometh in the clouds of heaven.

Only *let a man* first *examine himself*, whether he understand the nature and design of this holy institution, and whether he really desire to be himself made conformable to the death of Christ: *and so*, nothing doubting, "let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup," ver. 28.

Here then the direction first given by our Lord, is expressly repeated by the Apostle. Let him eat; let him drink: (εσθιετω πινετω, both in the imperative mood.) Words not implying a bare permission only, but a clear, explicit command: a command to all those, who either already are filled with peace and joy in believing, or who can truly say, "The remembrance of our sins is grievous unto us, the burden of them is intolerable."

12. And that this is also an ordinary, stated mean of receiving the grace of God, is evident from those words of the Apostle, which occur in the preceding chapter. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion [or *communication*] of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" 1 Cor. x. 16. Is not the eating of that bread, and the drinking of that cup, the outward, visible mean, whereby God conveys into our souls all that spiritual grace, that righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, which were purchased by the body of Christ once broken, and the blood of Christ once shed for us? Let all, therefore, who truly desire the grace of God, eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.

IV. 1. But as plainly as God hath pointed out the way, wherein he will be enquired after, innumerable are the objections which men, wise in their own eyes, have from time to time raised against it. It may be needful to consider a few of these; not because they are of weight in themselves, but because they have so often been used, especially of late years, to turn the lame out of the way; yea, to trouble and

subvert those who did run well, while Satan appeared as an angel of light.

The first and chief of these is, "You cannot use these means (as you call them) without *trusting* in them." I pray, where is this written? I expect you should shew me plain Scripture for your assertion; otherwise I dare not receive it: because I am not convinced that you are wiser than God.

If it really had been as you assert, it is certain Christ must have known it. And if he had known it, he would surely have warned us, he would have revealed it long ago. Therefore, because he has not, because there is no tittle of this in the whole revelation of Jesus Christ, I am as fully assured your assertion is false, as that this revelation is of God.

"However, leave them off for a short time, to see whether you trusted in them or not." So I am to disobey God, in order to know, whether I trust in obeying him! And do you avow this advice? Do you deliberately teach, to "do evil, that good may come?" O tremble at the sentence of God against such teachers! Their *damnation is just.*

"Nay, if you are troubled, when you leave them off, it is plain, you trusted in them." By no means. If I am troubled when I wilfully disobey God, it is plain his Spirit is still striving with me. But if I am not troubled at wilful sin, it is plain, I am given up to a reprobate mind.

But what do you mean by "*Trusting* in them?" Looking for the blessing of God therein? Believing, that if I wait in this way I shall attain, what otherwise I should not? So I do. And so I will, God being my helper, even to my life's end. By the grace of God I will *thus* trust in them, till the day of my death; that is, I will believe, that whatever God hath promised, he is faithful also to perform. And seeing he hath promised to bless me in this way, I *trust* it shall be according to his word.

2. It has been, secondly, objected, "This is seeking salvation by works." Do you know the meaning of the expression you use? What is, "seeking salvation by works?"

In the writings of St. Paul, it means, either seeking to be saved by observing the ritual works of the Mosaic law, or expecting salvation for the sake of our own works, by the merit of our own righteousness. But how is either of these implied, in my waiting in the way God has ordained, and expecting that he will meet me there, because he has promised so to do?

I do expect, that he will fulfil his word, that he will meet and bless me in this way. Yet not for the sake of any works which I have done, nor for the merit of my righteousness: but merely through the merits, and sufferings, and love of his Son, in whom he is always well-pleased.

3. It has been vehemently objected, thirdly, "That Christ is the only mean of grace." I answer, this is mere playing upon words. Explain your term, and the objection vanishes away. When we say, "Prayer is a mean of grace," we understand, a channel through which the grace of God is conveyed. When you say, "Christ is the mean of grace," you understand, the sole price and purchase of it. Or, that no "man cometh unto the Father, but through him." And who denies it? But this is utterly wide of the question.

4. "But does not the Scripture (it has been objected, fourthly) direct us to *wait* for salvation? Does not David say, 'My soul waiteth upon God; for of him cometh my salvation?' And does not Isaiah teach us the same thing, saying, 'O Lord, we have waited for thee?' " All this cannot be denied. Seeing it is the gift of God, we are undoubtedly to *wait* on him for salvation. But how shall we wait? If God himself has appointed a way, can you find a better way of waiting for him? But, that he hath appointed a way, hath been shewn at large, and also what that way is. The very words of the Prophet which you cite, put this out of all question. For the whole sentence runs thus: "In the way of thy judgments, [or ordinances], O Lord, have we waited for thee," Isaiah xxvi. 8. And in the very same way did David wait, as his own words abundantly testify: "I have waited for thy saving health, O Lord, and have kept thy

law. Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes, and I shall keep it unto the end."

5. " Yea, say some, but God has appointed another way, ' Stand still, and see the salvation of God.' ".

Let us examine the Scriptures to which you refer. The first of them, with the context, runs thus:

" And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lift up their eyes; and they were sore afraid. And they said unto Moses, because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not; stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord. And the Lord said unto Moses, speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward. But lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it. And the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea," Exod. xiv. 10, &c.

This was the *salvation of God*, which they *stood still* to see, by *marching forward* with all their might!

The other passage, wherein this expression occurs, stands thus: " There came some that told Jehoshaphat, saying, There cometh a great multitude against thee, from beyond the sea. And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. And Judah gathered themselves together to ask help of the Lord, even out of all the cities they came to seek the Lord. And Jehoshaphat stood in the congregation, in the house of the Lord.—Then upon Jahaziel came the Spirit of the Lord.—And he said, Be not dismayed by reason of this great multitude.—To-morrow go ye down against them, ye shall not need to fight in this battle. Set yourselves: stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord.—And they rose early in the morning and went forth. And when they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushments against the children of Moab, Ammon, and Mount Seir—and every one helped to destroy another," 2 Chron. xx. 2, &c.

Such was the salvation which the children of Judah saw. But how does all this prove, that we ought not to wait

for the grace of God, in the means which he hath ordained?

6. I shall mention but one objection more, which, indeed, does not properly belong to this head. Nevertheless, because it has been so frequently urged, I may not wholly pass it by.

"Does not St. Paul say, 'If ye be dead with Christ, why are ye subject to ordinances?' Col. ii. 20. Therefore a Christian, one that is *dead with Christ*, need not use the ordinances any more."

So you say, "If I am a Christian, I am not subject to the ordinances of Christ!" Surely, by the absurdity of this, you must see at the first glance, that the ordinances here mentioned cannot be the ordinances of Christ! That they must needs be the Jewish ordinances, to which it is certain, a Christian is no longer subject.

And the same undeniably appears from the words immediately following, "Touch not, taste not, handle not;" all evidently referring to the ancient ordinances of the Jewish law.

So that this objection is the weakest of all. And, in spite of all, that great truth must stand unshaken, That all who desire the grace of God, are to wait for it, in the means which he hath ordained.

V. 1. But this being allowed, that all who desire the grace of God, are to wait for it in the means he hath ordained; it may still be enquired, how those means should be used, both as to the *order*, and *manner* of using them?

With regard to the former, we may observe, there is a kind of order, wherein God himself is generally pleased, to use these means, in bringing a sinner to salvation. A stupid, senseless wretch is going on in his own way, not having God in all his thoughts, when God comes upon him unawares, perhaps by an awakening sermon or conversation, perhaps by some awful providence, or it may be by an immediate stroke of his convincing Spirit, without any outward means at all. Having now a desire to flee from the wrath to come,

he purposely goes to *hear* how it may be done. If he find a preacher who speaks to the heart, he is amazed, and begins "searching the Scriptures," whether these things are so? The more he *hears* and *reads*, the more convinced he is; and the more he *meditates* thereon day and night. Perhaps he finds some other book, which explains and enforces what he has heard and read in Scripture. And by all these means, the arrows of conviction sink deeper into his soul. He begins also to *talk* of the things of God, which are ever uppermost in his thoughts; yea, and to talk with God, to *pray* to him, although through fear and shame, he scarcely knows what to say. But whether he can speak or not, he cannot but pray, were it only in "groans which cannot be uttered." Yet being in doubt, whether "the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth Eternity," will regard such a sinner as he, he wants to pray with those who know God, with the faithful, in the *great congregation*. But here he observes others go up to the *table of the Lord*. He considers, Christ has said, "Do this!" How is it that I do not? I am too great a sinner. I am not fit. I am not worthy. After struggling with these scruples awhile, he breaks through. And thus he continues in God's way, in hearing, reading, meditating, praying, and partaking of the Lord's-Supper, till God, in the manner that pleases him, speaks to his heart, "Thy faith hath saved thee. Go in peace."

2. By observing this order of God, we may learn what means to recommend to any particular soul. If any of these will reach a stupid, careless sinner, it is probably *hearing* or *conversation*. To such therefore, we might recommend these, if he has ever any thought about salvation. To one who begins to feel the weight of his sins, not only hearing the Word of God, but *reading* it too, and perhaps other *serious books*, may be the means of deeper conviction. May you not advise him also, to *meditate* on what he reads, that it may have its full force upon his heart? Yea, and to *speak* thereof, and not be ashamed, particularly among those who walk in the same path. When trouble and heaviness take hold upon him, should you not then earnestly exhort him,

to pour out his soul before God! Always to "pray and not to faint." And when he feels the worthlessness of his own prayers, are you not to work together with God, and remind him of going up into "the house of the Lord," and praying with all that fear him? But, if he do this, the *dying Word* of his Lord will soon be brought to his remembrance; a plain intimation, that this is the time when we should second the motions of the blessed Spirit. And thus may we lead him, step by step, through all the means which God has ordained; not according to our own will, but just as the Providence and the Spirit of God go before and open the way.

3. Yet, as we find no command in Holy Writ, for any particular order to be observed herein, so neither do the Providence and the Spirit of God, adhere to any without variation: but the means into which different men are led, and in which they find the blessing of God, are varied, transposed, and combined together, a thousand different ways. Yet, still our wisdom is to follow the leadings of his Providence and his Spirit: to be guided herein, (more especially as to the means wherein we ourselves seek the grace of God), partly by his outward Providence, giving us the opportunity of using sometimes one mean, sometimes another: partly by our experience, which it is whereby his free Spirit is pleased most to work in our heart. And in the mean time, the sure and general rule for all who groan for the salvation of God, is this, Whenever opportunity serves, use all the means which God has ordained. For who knows, in which God will meet thee, with the grace that bringeth salvation?

4. As to the *manner* of using them, whereon indeed it wholly depends, whether they shall convey any grace at all to the user, it behoves us, First, Always to retain a lively sense, that God is above all means. Have a care therefore of limiting the Almighty. He doth whatsoever and whensoever it pleaseth him. He can convey his grace, either in or out of any of the means which he hath appointed. Perhaps he will. "Who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or, who hath been his Counsellor?" Look then every mo-

ment for his appearing! Be it at the hour you are employed in his ordinances; or before, or after that hour. Or, when you are hindered therefrom. He is not hindered. He is always ready: always able, always willing to save. "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good!"

Secondly, Before you use any mean, let it be deeply impressed on your soul, "There is no *power* in this." It is in itself, a poor, dead, empty thing: separate from God, it is a dry leaf, a shadow. Neither is there any *merit* in my using this; nothing intrinsically pleasing to God; nothing whereby I deserve any favour at his hands, no, not a drop of water to cool my tongue. But, because God bids, therefore I do; because he directs me to wait in this way; therefore, here I wait for his free mercy, whereof cometh my salvation.

Settle this in your heart, that the *opus operatum*, the mere work done profiteth nothing: that there is no *power* to save, but in the Spirit of God; no *merit*, but in the Blood of Christ: that, consequently, even what God ordains, conveys no grace to the soul, if you trust not in him alone. On the other hand, he that does truly trust in him, cannot fall short of the grace of God, even though he were cut off from every outward ordinance, though he were shut up in the centre of the earth.

Thirdly, In using all means, seek God alone. In and through every outward thing, look singly to the *power* of his Spirit, and the *merits* of his Son. Beware you do not stick in the *work* itself; if you do, it is all lost labour. Nothing short of God can satisfy your soul. Therefore, eye him in all, through all, and above all.

Remember also, to use all means, as *means:* as ordained, not for their own sake, but in order to the renewal of your soul in righteousness and true holiness. If, therefore, they actually tend to this, well: but, if not, they are dung and dross. Lastly, After you have used any of these, take care how you value yourself thereon: how you congratulate yourself as having done some great thing. This is turning all into poison. Think, "If God be not there, what does

this avail? Have I not been adding sin to sin? How long? O Lord! save, or I perish! O lay not this sin to my charge!" If God were there, if his love flowed into your heart, you have forgot, as it were, the outward work. You see, you know, you feel, God is all in all. Be abased. Sink down before him. Give him all the praise, "Let God in all things be glorified through Christ Jesus." Let all your bones cry out, "My song shall be always of the loving-kindness of the Lord: with my mouth will I ever be telling of thy truth, from one generation to another!"

SERMON XVII.

THE CIRCUMCISION OF THE HEART:

PREACHED AT

ST. MARY'S, OXFORD, BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY,

ON JANUARY 1, 1733.

ROMANS ii. 29.

"*Circumcision is that of the Heart, in the Spirit, and not in the Letter.*"

1. IT is the melancholy remark of an excellent man, that, He who now preaches the most essential duties of Christianity, runs the hazard of being esteemed, by a great part of his hearers, *a setter forth of new doctrines.* Most men have so *lived away* the substance of that Religion, the profession whereof they still retain, that no sooner are any of those truths proposed, which difference the Spirit of Christ from the spirit of the world, than they cry out, "Thou bringest strange things to our ears; we would know what these things mean:" though he is only preaching to them *Jesus and the Resurrection*, with the necessary consequence of it. "If Christ be risen, ye ought then to die to the world, and to live wholly unto God."

A hard saying this to the *natural man*, who is alive unto the world, and dead unto God; and one that he will not readily be persuaded to receive as the truth of God, unless it be so qualified in the interpretation, as to have neither use nor significancy left. He "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God," taken in their plain and obvious meaning. "They are foolishness unto him: neither

(indeed) can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned:" they are perceivable only by that spiritual sense, which in him was never yet awakened; for want of which he must reject as idle fancies of men, what are both the *wisdom* and the *power of God*.

3. That "circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter;" that the distinguishing mark of a true follower of Christ, of one who is in a state of acceptance with God, is not either outward circumcision or baptism, or any other outward form, but a right state of soul, a mind and spirit renewed after the image of him that created it, is one of those important truths, that can only be *spiritually discerned*. And this the Apostle himself intimates in the next words, "Whose praise is not of men, but of God." As if he had said, "Expect not, whoever thou art, who thus followest thy great Master, that the world, the men who follow him not, will say, 'Well done, good and faithful servant!' Know, that the *circumcision of the heart*, the seal of thy calling, *is foolishness with the world*. Be content to wait for thy applause, till the day of thy Lord's appearing. In that day shalt thou *have praise of God*, in the great assembly of men and angels."

I design, first, particularly to enquire, Wherein this Circumcision of the Heart consists? And, secondly, to mention some reflections, that naturally arise from such an enquiry.

I. 1. I am, first, to enquire, Wherein that circumcision of the heart consists, which will receive the praise of God? In general we may observe, it is that habitual disposition of soul, which, in the Sacred Writings, is termed Holiness, and which directly implies, the being cleansed from sin, "from all filthiness of flesh and spirit," and by consequence, the being endued with virtues, which were also in Christ Jesus; the being so, "renewed in the spirit of our mind," as to be "perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect."

2. To be more particular. Circumcision of Heart, implies, Humility, Faith, Hope, and Charity. Humility, a

right judgment of ourselves, cleanses our minds from those high conceits of our own perfections, from that undue opinion of our own abilities and attainments, which are the genuine fruit of a corrupt nature. This entirely cuts off that vain thought, I am *rich*, and *wise*, and *have need of nothing;* and convinces us, that we are by nature "wretched, and poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked." It convinces us, that in our best estate, we are of ourselves all sin and vanity; that confusion, and ignorance, and error, reign over our understanding; that unreasonable, earthly, sensual, devilish passions, usurp authority over our will: in a word, that there is no sound part in our soul, that all the foundations of our nature are out of course.

3. At the same time we are convinced, that we are not sufficient of ourselves to help ourselves; that, without the Spirit of God, we can do nothing but add sin to sin: that it is He alone *who worketh in us by* his almighty power, either *to will or do* that which is good; it being as impossible for us even to think a good thought, without the supernatural assistance of his Spirit, as to create ourselves, or to renew our whole souls in righteousness and true holiness.

4. A sure effect of our having formed this right judgment of the sinfulness and helplessness of our nature, is a disregard of that "honour which cometh of man," which is usually paid to some supposed excellency in us. He who knows himself, neither desires nor values the applause which he knows he deserves not. It is therefore "a very small thing with him, to be judged by man's judgment." He has all reason to think, by comparing what it has said either for or against him, with what he feels in his own breast, that the world, as well as the god of this world, was "a liar from the beginning." And even as to those who are not of the world, though he would chuse, if it were the will of God, that they should account of him as of one desirous to be found a faithful steward of the Lord's goods, if happily this might be a mean of enabling him to be of more use to his fellow-servants, yet as this is the one end of his wishing for their approbation, so he does not at all rest upon it. For

he is assured, that whatever God wills, he can never want instruments to perform; since he is able, even of these stones, to raise up servants to do his pleasure.

5. This is that lowliness of mind, which they have learned of Christ, who follow his example and tread in his steps. And this knowledge of their disease, whereby they are more and more cleansed from one part of it, pride and vanity, disposes them to embrace, with a willing mind, the second thing implied in *circumcision of heart*, that Faith which alone is able to make them whole, which is the one medicine given under heaven to heal their sickness.

6. The best guide of the blind, the surest light of them that are in darkness, the most perfect instructor of the foolish, is Faith. But it must be such a faith as is "mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong-holds," to the overturning all the prejudices of corrupt reason, all the false maxims revered among men; all evil customs and habits; all that "wisdom of the world which is foolishness with God;" as "casteth down imaginations [*reasonings*] and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringeth into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

7. "All things are possible to him that (thus) believeth:" "the eyes of his understanding being enlightened," he *sees* what is his calling, even to *glorify God*, who hath *bought him with* so high *a price*, in his body and in his spirit, which now are God's by redemption, as well as creation. He feels what is "the exceeding greatness of his power," who, as he raised up Christ from the dead, so is able to quicken us, *dead in sin*, "by his Spirit which dwelleth in us." "This is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith:" that faith, which is not only an unshaken assent to all that God hath revealed in Scripture, and in particular to those important truths, "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners:" "He bare our sins in his own body on the tree:" "He is the Propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole

world;"* but likewise the revelation of Christ in our hearts; a divine evidence or conviction of his love, his free, unmerited love to me a sinner; a sure confidence in his pardoning mercy, wrought in us by the Holy Ghost: a confidence, whereby every true believer is enabled to bear witness, "I know that my Redeemer liveth;" "that I have an Advocate with the Father; that Jesus Christ the righteous, is my Lord, and the propitiation for my sins." I know he *hath loved* me, *and given himself for* me. He *hath reconciled* me, *even* me *to God;* and I "have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins."

8. Such a faith as this, cannot fail to shew evidently the power of him that inspires it, by delivering his children from the yoke of sin, and "purging their consciences from dead works;" by strengthening them so, that they are no longer constrained to "obey sin in the desires thereof;" but instead of "yielding their members unto it, as instruments of unrighteousness," they now *yield* themselves entirely "unto God, as those that are alive from the dead."

9. Those who are thus by faith "born of God," have also "strong consolation through hope." This is the next thing which the *circumcision of the heart* implies: even the testimony of their own spirit, with the Spirit which witnesses in their hearts, that they are the children of God. Indeed it is the same Spirit who works in them that clear and cheerful confidence, that their heart is upright toward God; that good assurance, that they now do, through his grace, the things which are acceptable in his sight; that they are now in the path which leadeth to life, and shall, by the mercy of God, endure therein to the end. It is he who giveth them a lively expectation of receiving all good things at God's hand; a joyous prospect of that "crown of glory, which is reserved in heaven" for them. By this anchor a Christian is kept steady in the midst of the waves of this troublesome world, and preserved from striking upon either

* N. B. The following part of this paragraph is now added to the Sermon formerly preached.

of those fatal rocks, Presumption or Despair. He is neither discouraged by the misconceived severity of his Lord, nor does he "despise the riches of his goodness." He neither apprehends the difficulties of the race set before him, to be greater than he has strength to conquer, nor expects them to be so little as to yield in the conquest, till he has put forth all his strength. The experience he already has in the Christian warfare, as it assures him, his "labour is not in vain," if "whatever his hand find to do, he do it with his might;" so it forbids his entertaining so vain a thought, as that he can otherwise gain any advantage, as that any virtue can be shewn, any praise attained, by *faint hearts and feeble hands:* or indeed by any but those who pursue the same course with the great Apostle of the Gentiles, "I (says he,) so run, not as uncertainly, so fight I, not as one that beateth the air. But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away."

10. By the same discipline is every good soldier of Christ, to inure himself to "endure hardships." Confirmed and strengthened by this, he will be able, not only to renounce the *works of darkness*, but every appetite too, and every affection, which is not subject to the law of God. For "every one," (saith St. John,) "who hath this hope, purifieth himself even as he is pure." It is his daily care, by the grace of God in Christ, and through the blood of the Covenant, to purge the inmost recesses of his soul, from the lusts that before possessed and defiled it; from uncleanness, and envy, and malice, and wrath; from every passion and temper, that is *after the flesh*, that either springs from, or cherishes his native corruption: as well knowing, that he whose very *body is the temple of God*, ought to admit into it nothing common or unclean; and that *holiness becometh* that *house for ever*, where the Spirit of holiness vouchsafes to dwell.

11. Yet lackest thou one thing, whosoever thou art, that to a deep humility, and a steadfast faith, hast joined a lively hope, and thereby in a good measure cleansed thy heart

from its inbred pollution. If thou wilt be perfect, add to all these, Charity; add Love, and thou hast the *circumcision of the heart.* "Love is the fulfilling of the law, the end of the commandment." Very excellent things are spoken of love; it is the essence, the spirit, the life of all virtue. It is not only the first and great command, but it is all the commandments in one. Whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are amiable or honourable; if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, they are all comprised in this one word, Love. In this is perfection, and glory, and happiness: The royal law of heaven and earth is this, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength."

12. Not that this forbids us to love any thing besides God: it implies, that we "love our brother also." Nor yet does it forbid us (as some have strangely imagined) to take pleasure in any thing but God. To suppose this, is to suppose the Fountain of holiness, is directly the Author of sin: since he has inseparably annexed pleasure to the use of those creatures, which are necessary to sustain the life he has given us. This therefore can never be the meaning of his command. What the real sense of it is, both our blessed Lord and his Apostles tell us too frequently and too plainly to be misunderstood. They all with one mouth bear witness, that the true meaning of those several declarations, "The Lord thy God is one Lord;" "Thou shalt have no other gods but me;" "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy strength;" "Thou shalt cleave unto him;" "The desire of thy soul shall be to his Name:" is no other than this. The one, perfect Good, shall be your one ultimate end. One thing shall ye desire for its own sake. The fruition of Him that is All in all. One happiness shall ye propose to your souls, even an union with him that made them: the having "fellowship with the Father and the Son:" the being "joined to the Lord in one spirit." One design you are to pursue to the end of time. The enjoyment of God in time and in eternity. Desire other things,

so far as they tend to this. Love the creature—as it leads to the Creator. But in every step you take, be this the glorious point that terminates your view. Let every affection, and thought, and word, and work, be subordinate to this. Whatever ye desire or fear, whatever ye seek or shun, whatever ye think, speak, or do, be it in order to your happiness in God, the sole End as well as Source of your being.

13. Have no end, no ultimate end but God. Thus our Lord, "One thing is needful." And if thine eye be singly fixed on this one thing, "thy whole body shall be full of light." Thus St. Paul, "This one thing I do; I press toward the mark, for the prize of my high calling in Christ Jesus." Thus St. James, "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and purify your hearts, ye double-minded." Thus St. John, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." The seeking happiness in what gratifies either the desire of the flesh, by agreeably striking upon the outward senses; the desire of the eye, of the imagination, by its novelty, greatness, or beauty; or the pride of life, whether by pomp, grandeur, power, or the usual consequence of them, applause and admiration; "is not of the Father," cometh not from, neither is approved by the Father of spirits; "but of the world;" it is the distinguishing mark of those, who will not have him to reign over them.

II. Thus have I particularly enquired, what that *Circumcision of Heart* is, which will obtain the praise of God. I am, in the second place, to mention some Reflections, that naturally arise from such an enquiry, as a plain rule whereby every man may judge of himself, whether he be of the world or of God.

1. And, first, it is clear, from what has been said, That no man has a title to the praise of God, unless his heart is circumcised by humility, unless he be little, and base, and vile in his own eyes, unless he be deeply convinced of that

inbred "corruption of his nature, whereby he is very far gone from original righteousness," being prone to all evil, averse to all good, corrupt and abominable: having a "carnal mind, which is enmity against God, and is not subject to the law of God; nor indeed can be:" unless he continually feel in his inmost soul, that without the Spirit of God resting upon him, he can neither think, nor desire, nor act, any thing good or well-pleasing in his sight.

No man, I say, has a title to the praise of God, till he feel his want of God: nor indeed, till he seek that "honour which cometh of God only:" and neither desire nor pursue that which cometh of man, unless so far only as it tends to this.

2. Another truth, which naturally follows from what has been said, is, that none shall obtain the honour that cometh of God, unless his heart be circumcised by faith; even a "faith of the operation of God:" unless, refusing to be any longer led by his senses, appetites, or passions, or even by that blind leader of the blind, so idolized by the world, Natural Reason, he lives and *walks by faith*, directs every step, as "seeing Him that is Invisible," "looks not at the things that are seen, which are temporal, but at the things that are not seen, which are eternal," and governs all his desires, designs, and thoughts, all his actions and conversations, as one who is entered in within the veil, where Jesus sits at the right-hand of God.

3. It were to be wished, that they were better acquainted with this faith, who employ much of their time and pains in laying another foundation; in grounding religion on "the eternal *fitness* of things," on "the intrinsic *excellence* of virtue," and the *beauty* of actions flowing from it: on the *reasons*, as they term them, of good and evil, and the *relations* of beings to each other. Either these accounts of the grounds of Christian duty, coincide with the scriptural, or not. If they do, why are well-meaning men perplexed, and drawn from the weightier matters of the law, by a cloud of terms, whereby the easiest truths are explained into obscurity. If they are not, then it behoves them to consider,

who is the Author of this new doctrine: whether he is likely to be *an angel from heaven*, who *preacheth another gospel* than that of Christ Jesus: though, if he were, God, not we, hath pronounced his sentence, "Let him be accursed."

4. Our gospel, as it knows no other foundation of good works than faith, or of faith than Christ, so it clearly informs us, we are not his disciples, while we either deny him to be the Author, or his Spirit to be the Inspirer and Perfecter both of our faith and works. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." He alone can quicken those who are dead unto God, can breathe into them the breath of Christian life, and so prevent, accompany, and follow them with his grace, as to bring their good desires to good effect. And, "as many as are thus led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." This is God's short and plain account of true Religion and Virtue; and "other foundation can no man lay."

5. From what has been said, we may, Thirdly, learn, That none is truly "led by the Spirit," unless that "Spirit bear witness with his spirit, that he is a child of God:" unless he see the prize and the crown before him, and "rejoice in the hope of the glory of God:" so greatly have they erred who have taught that, in serving God, we ought not to have a view to our own happiness. Nay, but we are often and expressly taught of God, to have "respect *unto the recompence of reward;*" to balance the toil with the "joy set before us," these "light afflictions" with that "exceeding weight of glory." Yea, we are "aliens to the covenant of promise, we are without God in the world," until God, "of his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again, unto a living hope, of the inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

6. But if these things be so, it is high time for those persons to deal faithfully with their own souls, who are so far from finding in themselves this joyful assurance, that they fulfil the terms, and shall obtain the promises of that covenant, as to quarrel with the covenant itself, and blaspheme

the terms of it: to complain, "They are too severe, and that no man ever did, or shall live up to them!" What is this, but to reproach God, as if he were a hard Master, requiring of his servants more than he enables them to perform; as if he had mocked the helpless works of his hands, by binding them to impossibilities; by commanding them to overcome, where neither their own strength, nor his grace was sufficient for them?

7. These blasphemers might almost persuade those, to imagine themselves guiltless, who, in the contrary extreme, hope to fulfil the commands of God, without taking any pains at all. Vain hope! that a child of Adam should ever expect to see the kingdom of Christ and of God, without striving, without *agonizing* first, "to enter in at the strait gate!" that one who was "conceived and born in sin," and whose "inward parts are very wickedness," should once entertain a thought of being "purified as his Lord is pure," unless he "tread in his steps," and "take up his cross daily:" unless he "cut off his right hand," and "pluck out the right eye, and cast it from him;" that he should ever dream of shaking off his old opinions, passions, tempers; of being "sanctified throughout in spirit, soul, and body," without a constant and continued course of general self-denial.

8. What less than this can we possibly infer from the above cited words of St. Paul, who, living in "infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake," who, being full of "signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds," who, having been "caught up into the third heaven;" yet reckoned, as a late author strongly expresses it, that all his virtues would be insecure, and even his salvation in danger, without this constant self-denial. "So run I, (says he), not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air." By which he plainly teaches us, that he who does not thus run, who does not thus deny himself daily, does *run uncertainly*, and fighteth to as little purpose as he that *beateth the air*.

9. To as little purpose does he talk of "fighting the fight of faith," as vainly hopes to attain the crown of incorruption, (as we may, Lastly, infer from the preceding observations), whose heart is not circumcised by Love. Cutting off both the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, engaging the whole man, body, soul, and spirit, in the ardent pursuit of that one object, is so essential to a child of God, that, "without it, whosoever liveth is counted dead before him." "Though I speak with the tongue of men and angels, and have not Love, I am as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. Though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, and have not Love, I am nothing." Nay, "though I give all my goods to feed the poor, and my body to be burned, and have not Love, it profiteth me nothing."

10. Here, then, is the sum of the perfect law, this is the true *Circumcision of the Heart*. Let the spirit return to God that gave it, with the whole train of its affections. "Unto the place from whence all the rivers came," *thither* let them flow again. Other sacrifices from us he would not; but the living sacrifice of the heart he hath chosen. Let it be continually offered up to God through Christ, in flames of holy love. And let no creature be suffered to share with him: for he is a jealous God. His throne will he not divide with another: he will reign without a rival. Be no design, no desire admitted there, but what has him for its ultimate object. This is the way wherein those children of God once walked, who being dead, still speak to us, "Desire not to live, but to praise his name; let all your thoughts, words, and works, tend to his glory. Set your heart firm on him, and on other things only as they are in and from him. Let your soul be filled with so entire a love of him, that you may love nothing but for his sake." "Have a pure intention of heart, a steadfast regard to his glory in all your actions." "Fix your eye upon the blessed hope of your

calling, and make all the things of the world minister unto it." For then, and not till then, is that "mind in us which was also in Christ Jesus," when, in every motion of our heart, in every word of our tongue, in every work of our hands, we "pursue nothing but in relation to him, and in subordination to his pleasure:" when we too, neither think, nor speak, nor act, to fulfil our own "will, but the will of him that sent us:" when, whether we "eat, or drink, or whatever we do, we do all to the glory of God."

SERMON XVIII.

THE MARKS OF THE NEW-BIRTH.

JOHN iii. 8.

"So is every one that is born of the Spirit."

1. HOW is every one that is *born of the Spirit*, that is, *born again, born of God?* What is meant by the being *born again?* The being *born of God?* Or, being *born of the Spirit?* What is implied in, The being a *son* or a *child of God?* Or, having the *Spirit of Adoption?* That these privileges, by the free mercy of God, are ordinarily annexed to baptism (which is thence termed by our Lord in the preceding verse, the being *born of water and of the Spirit)* we know; but we would know what these privileges are: What is *the New-Birth?*

2. Perhaps it is not needful to give a definition of this, seeing the Scripture gives none. But as the question is of the deepest concern, to every child of man, (since, "except a man be born again, [born of the Spirit], he cannot see the kingdom of God,") I propose to lay down the marks of it in the plainest manner, just as I find them laid down in Scripture.

I. 1. The first of these (and the foundation of all the rest) is Faith. So St. Paul, "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus," Gal. iii. 26. So St. John, "To

them gave he power (εξουσιαν, *right* or *privilege*, it may rather be translated), to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, [when they believed,] (not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh," not by natural generation, "nor of the will of man," like those children adopted by men, in whom no inward change is thereby wrought, but) of God," ch. i. 12, 13. And again in his general epistle, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God," 1 John v. 1.

2. But it is not a barely notional or speculative faith that is here spoken of by the Apostle. It is not a bare assent to this proposition, "Jesus is the Christ;" nor indeed to all the propositions contained in our Creed, or in the Old and New Testament. It is not merely an assent to any, or all these credible things, as credible. To say this, were to say (which who could hear?) that the devils were born of God. For they have this faith. They trembling believe, both that Jesus is the Christ, and that all Scripture, having been given by inspiration of God, is true as God is true. It is not only "an assent to divine truth, upon the testimony of God," or, "upon the evidence of miracles," for they also heard the words of his mouth, and knew him to be a faithful and true witness. They could not but receive the testimony he gave, both of himself, and of the Father who sent him. They saw likewise the mighty works which he did, and thence believed that he *came forth from God.* Yet, notwithstanding this faith, they are still "reserved in chains of darkness, unto the judgment of the great day."

3. For all this is no more than a dead faith. The true, living, Christian faith, which whosoever hath is *born of God*, is not only an assent, an act of the understanding, but a disposition which God hath wrought in his heart; "a sure trust and confidence in God, that through the merits of Christ his sins are forgiven, and he reconciled to the favour of God." This implies, that a man first *renounces himself;* that, in order to be *found in Christ*, to be accepted through him, he totally rejects all "confidence in the flesh;" that, "having nothing to pay," having no trust in his own works

or righteousness of any kind, he comes to God, as a lost, miserable, self-destroyed, self-condemned, undone, helpless sinner; as one whose *mouth* is utterly *stopped*, and who is altogether "guilty before God." Such a sense of sin (commonly called *despair*, by those who speak evil of the things they know not) together with a full conviction, such as no words can express, that of Christ only cometh our salvation, and an earnest desire of that salvation, must precede a living faith: a trust in him, who, "for us, paid our ransom by his death, and for us fulfilled the law in his life." This faith then, whereby we are born of God, is "not only a belief of all the Articles of our Faith, but also a true confidence of the mercy of God, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

4. An immediate and constant fruit of this faith, whereby we are born of God, a fruit which can in no wise be separated from it, no, not for an hour, is power over sin: power over outward sin, of every kind; over every evil word and work; for, wheresoever the blood of Christ is thus applied, it "purgeth the conscience from dead works:" and over inward sin; for it *purifieth the heart* from every unholy desire and temper. This fruit of faith St. Paul has largely described, in the sixth chapter of his epistle to the Romans. "How shall we," saith he, "who (by faith) are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Our old man is crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.—Likewise, reckon ye yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin, therefore, reign even in your mortal body, but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead. For sin shall not have dominion over you.—God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin,—But being made free;"—the plain meaning is, God be thanked, that though ye were in time past the servants of sin, yet now "being free from sin, ye are become the servants of righteousness."

5. The same invaluable privilege of the sons of God, is as strongly asserted by St. John; particularly, with regard to the former branch of it, namely, power over outward sin.

After he had been crying out, as one astonished at the depth of the riches of the goodness of God, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God! Beloved, now are we the sons of God: and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is," 1 John iii. 1, &c.; he soon adds, "Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God," ver. 9. But some men will say, "True: whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin *habitually*." *Habitually!* whence is that? I read it not. It is not written in the Book. God plainly saith, "He doth not commit sin." And thou addest, *habitually!* Who art thou that *mendest* the Oracles of God? That "addest to the words of this Book?" Beware, I beseech thee, lest God "add to thee, all the plagues that are written therein!" Especially when the comment thou addest is such, as quite swallows up the text: so that by this μεθοδεια πλανης, this artful method of deceiving, the precious promise is utterly lost; by this κυβεια ανθρωπων, this tricking and shuffling of men, the Word of God is made of none effect. O beware, thou that thus takest from the words of this book, that taking away the whole meaning and spirit from them, leavest only what may indeed be termed a dead letter, lest God take away thy part out of the Book of Life!

6. Suffer we the Apostle to interpret his own words, by the whole tenor of his discourse. In the fifth verse of this chapter, he had said, "Ye know that he [Christ] was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin." What is the inference he draws from this? "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him," ch. iii. 6. To his enforcement of this important doctrine, he premises an highly necessary caution: "Little children, let no man deceive you," ver. 7. (For many will endeavour so to do; to persuade you that you may be unrighteous, that you may commit sin, and yet

be children of God.) "He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning." Then follows, "Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin: for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this," adds the Apostle, "the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil." By this plain mark (the committing or not committing sin) are they distinguished from each other. To the same effect are those words in his fifth chapter, "We know that whosoever is born of God, sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one touched him not," ver. 18.

7. Another fruit of this living faith is Peace. For, "being justified by faith," having all our sins blotted out, "we have Peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ," Rom. v. 1. This indeed our Lord himself, the night before his death, solemnly bequeathed to all his followers. "Peace," saith he, "I leave with you;" (you who *believe in God*, and *believe also in me;)* "my peace I give unto you." "Not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid," John xiv. 27. And, again, "These things have I spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace," ch. xvi. 33. This is that "peace of God, which passeth all understanding," that serenity of soul, which it hath not entered into the heart of a natural man to conceive, and which it is not possible for even the spiritual man to utter. And it is a peace which all the powers of earth and hell are unable to take from him. Waves and storms beat upon it, but they shake it not; for it is founded upon a Rock. It keepeth the hearts and minds of the children of God, at all times and in all places. Whether they are in ease or in pain, in sickness or in health, in abundance or want, they are happy in God. In every state they have learned to be content, yea, to give thanks unto God through Christ Jesus: being well assured, that "whatsoever is, is best;" because it is his will concerning them.

So that in all the vicissitudes of life, their "heart standeth fast, believing in the Lord."

II. 1. A second scriptural mark of those who are born of God is Hope. Thus St. Peter, speaking to all the children of God, who were then *scattered abroad*, saith, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope," 1 Pet. i. 3. Ελπιδα ζωσαν, a *lively* or *living* Hope, saith the Apostle: because there is also a *dead* hope, (as well as a dead faith), a hope which is not from God, but from the enemy of God and man; as evidently appears by its fruits: for, as it is the offspring of pride, so it is the parent of every evil word and work; whereas, every man that hath in him this living hope, is "holy as he that calleth him is holy:" every man that can truly say to his brethren in Christ, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and we shall see him as he is, purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

2. This hope, termed in the epistle to the Hebrews, chap. x. 22, πληροφορια πιστεως, and elsewhere, πληροφορια ελπιδος, chap. vi. 11, (in our translation, "the full assurance of faith, and the full assurance of hope;" expressions the best which our language could afford, although far weaker than those in the original), as described in Scripture, implies, First, The testimony of our own spirit or conscience, that we walk "in simplicity and godly sincerity:" but, Secondly and chiefly, The testimony of the Spirit of God, "bearing witness with, or to, our spirit, that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ."

3. Let us well observe, what is here taught us by God himself, touching the glorious privilege of his children. Who is it, that is here said to *bear witness?* Not our spirit only, but another; even the Spirit of God: he it is who "beareth witness with our spirit." What is it, he beareth witness of? "That we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ,"

Rom. viii. 16, 17,—"if so be that we suffer with him, (if we deny ourselves, if we take up our cross daily, if we cheerfully endure persecution or reproach for his sake), that we may also be glorified together." And in whom doth the Spirit of God bear this witness? In all who are the children of God. By this very argument does the Apostle prove in the preceding verses that they are so: "As many (saith he) as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." "For ye have not received the Spirit of Bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of Adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father!" It follows, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God," ch. viii. 11, 15, 16.

4. The variation of the phrase in the 15th verse, is worthy our observation. "Ye have received the Spirit of Adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father!" Ye, as many as are the sons of God, have, in virtue of your sonship, received that self-same Spirit of Adoption, whereby *we* cry, Abba, Father. *We*, the Apostles, Prophets, Teachers, (for so the word may not improperly be understood), *we*, through whom you have believed, the "Ministers of Christ, and Stewards of the mysteries of God." As *we* and *you* have one Lord, so we have one Spirit: as we have one Faith, so we have one Hope also. We and you are sealed with one *Spirit of Promise*, the earnest of *yours* and of *our* inheritance: the same Spirit bearing witness with yours and with our spirit, "that we are the children of God."

5. And thus is the Scripture fulfilled, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." For it is easy to believe, that though sorrow may precede this witness of God's Spirit with our spirit, (indeed *must*, in some degree, while we groan under fear, and a sense of the wrath of God abiding on us,) yet, as soon as any man feeleth it in himself, his "sorrow is turned into joy." Whatsoever his pain may have been before, yet, as soon as that "hour is come, he remembereth the anguish no more, for joy" that he is born of God. It may be, many of *you* have now sorrow, because you are "aliens from the common-wealth of Israel;"

because you are conscious to yourselves that you have not this Spirit, that you are "without hope and without God in the world." But when the Comforter is come, "then your heart shall rejoice; yea, your joy shall be full, and that joy no man taketh from you," John xvi. 22. "We joy in God," will ye say, "through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the Atonement:" "by whom we have access into this grace," this state of grace, of favour, or reconciliation with God, "wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God," Romans v. 2. "Ye," saith St. Peter, "whom God hath begotten again unto a lively hope, are kept by the power of God unto salvation:" "Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith may be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ: In whom, though now ye see him not, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory," 1 Pet. i. 5, &c. Unspeakable indeed! It is not for the tongue of man to describe this joy in the Holy Ghost. It is "hidden manna, which no man knoweth, save he that receiveth it." But this we know, it not only remains but overflows in the depth of affliction. "Are the consolations of God small" with his children, when all earthly comforts fail? Not so. But when sufferings most abound, the consolation of his Spirit doth much more abound; insomuch, that the sons of God "laugh at destruction when it cometh;" at want, pain, hell, and the grave; as knowing him who "hath the keys of death and hell," as hearing even now the great voice out of heaven, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away," Rev. xxi. 3, 4.

III. 1. A third scriptural mark of those who are born of God, and the greatest of all, is Love: even "the love of

God shed abroad in their hearts, by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto them," Rom. v. 5. "Because they are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into their hearts, crying, Abba, Father!" Gal. iv. 8. By this Spirit, continually looking up to God, as their reconciled and loving Father, they cry to him for their daily bread, for all things needful, whether for their souls or bodies. They continually pour out their hearts before him, knowing "they have the petitions which they ask of him," 1 John v. 15. Their delight is in him. He is the joy of their heart: their *shield*, and their "exceeding great reward." The desire of their soul is toward him: it is their "meat and drink to do his will;" and they are "satisfied as with marrow and fatness, while their mouth praiseth him with joyful lips," Psalm lxiii. 5.

2. And, in this sense also, "Every one who loveth him that begat, loveth him that is begotten of him," 1 John v. 1. His spirit rejoiceth in God his Saviour. He "loveth the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity:" he is so "joined unto the Lord," as to be *one Spirit*. His soul hangeth upon him, and chooseth him as altogether lovely, "the chiefest among ten thousand." He knoweth, he feeleth what that means, "My beloved is mine, and I am his." "Thou art fairer than the children of men; full of grace are thy lips, because God hath anointed thee for ever!" Psalm xlv. 2.

3. The necessary fruit of this love of God, is the love of our neighbour, of every soul which God hath made: not excepting our enemies, not excepting those who are now "despitefully using and persecuting us:" a love, whereby we love every man as ourselves, as we love our own souls. Nay, our Lord has expressed it still more strongly, teaching us to "love one another even as he hath loved us." Accordingly, the commandment written in the hearts of all those that love God, is no other than this, "As I have loved you, so love ye one another." Now, "herein perceive we the love of God, in that he laid down his life for us," 1 John iii. 16. "We ought" then, as the Apostle justly infers, "to lay down our lives for our brethren." If

we feel ourselves ready to do this, then do we truly love our neighbour. Then "we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we thus love our brethren," ver. 14. "Hereby know we" that we are born of God, that we "dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his [loving] Spirit," ch. iv. 13. For "Love is of God, and every one that thus loveth, is born of God, and knoweth God," 1 John iv. 7.

4. But some may possibly ask, Does not the Apostle say, "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments?" 1 John v. 3. Yea, and this is the love of our neighbour also, in the same sense as it is the love of God. But what would you infer from hence? That the keeping the outward commandments, is all that is implied in loving God with all your heart, with all your mind, and soul, and strength, and in loving your neighbour as yourself? That the love of God is not an affection of the soul, but merely an *outward service?* And that the love of our neighbour is not a disposition of heart, but barely a course of *outward works!* To mention so wild an interpretation of the Apostle's words, is sufficiently to confute it. The plain indisputable meaning of that text is, *this is the* sign or proof of the *love of God*, of our keeping the first and great commandment, to keep all the rest of his commandments. For true love, if it be once shed abroad in our hearts, will constrain us so to do; since, whosoever loves God with all his heart, cannot but serve him with all his strength.

5. A second fruit then of the love of God, (so far as it can be distinguished from it), is universal obedience to him we love, and conformity to his will: obedience to all the commands of God, internal and external: obedience of the heart and of the life, in every temper, and in all manner of conversation. And one of the tempers most obviously implied herein is, the being "zealous of good works;" the hungering and thirsting to do good in every possible kind, unto all men; the rejoicing to "spend and be spent for them," for every child of man, not looking for any recompense in this world, but only in the resurrection of the just.

1. Thus have I plainly laid down those marks of the New-Birth, which I find laid down in Scripture. Thus doth God himself answer that weighty question, What is it to be born of God? Such, if the appeal be made to the Oracles of God, is "every one that is born of the Spirit." This it is, in the judgment of the Spirit of God, to be a son or a child of God. It is, so to believe in God through Christ, as "not to commit sin," and to enjoy at all times, and in all places, that "peace of God which passeth all understanding." It is, so to *hope* in God through the Son of his love, as to have not only the "testimony of a good conscience," but also the Spirit of God, "bearing witness with your spirits, that ye are the children of God:" whence cannot but spring, the "rejoicing evermore in him, through whom ye have received the atonement." It is so to *love* God, who hath thus loved you, as you never did love any creature: so that ye are constrained to love all men as yourselves; with a love, not only ever burning in your hearts, but flaming out in all your actions and conversation, and making your whole life one *labour of love*, one continued obedience to those commands, "Be ye merciful, as God is merciful: Be ye holy, as I the Lord am holy: Be ye perfect, as your Father who is in heaven is perfect."

2. Who then are ye that are thus born of God? Ye "know the things which are given to you of God." Ye well know, that ye are the children of God, and "can assure your hearts before him." And every one of you who has observed these words, cannot but feel, and know of a truth, whether at this hour, (answer to God and not to man!) you are thus a child of God or not? The question is not, what you were made in baptism: (do not evade.) But, what are you now? Is the Spirit of Adoption now in your heart? To your own heart let the appeal be made. I ask not, whether you *were* born of water and of the spirit. But *are* you *now* the temple of the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in you? I allow you were "circumcised with the circumcision of Christ," (as St. Paul emphatically terms Baptism.) But does the Spirit of Christ and of glory *now* rest

upon you? Else "your circumcision is become uncircumcision"

3. Say not then in your heart, I *was once* baptized, therefore I *am now* a child of God. Alas, that consequence will by no means hold. How many are the baptized gluttons and drunkards, the baptized liars and common swearers, the baptized railers and evil-speakers, the baptized whoremongers, thieves, extortioners? What think you? Are these now the children of God? Verily, I say unto you, whosoever you are, unto whom any one of the preceding characters belong, "ye are of your father the devil, and the works of your father ye do." Unto you I call, in the name of him whom you crucify afresh, and in his words to your circumcised predecessors, "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?"

4. How indeed, except ye be born again! For ye are now dead in trespasses and sins. To say then, that ye cannot be born again, that there is no new-birth but in baptism, is to seal you all under damnation, to consign you to hell, without help, without hope. And perhaps some may think this just and right. In their zeal for the Lord of Hosts, they may say, "Yea, cut off the sinners, the Amalekites! Let these Gibeonites be utterly destroyed! They deserve no less." No; nor I: nor you. Mine and your desert, as well as theirs, is hell. And it is mere mercy, free, undeserved mercy, that *we* are not now in unquenchable fire. You will say, "But we are washed, we are born again of water and of the Spirit." So *were* they. This therefore hinders not at all, but that ye may *now* be even as they. Know ye not, that "what is highly esteemed of men is an abomination in the sight of God?" Come forth, ye "saints of the world," ye that are honoured of men, and see who will cast the first stone at them, at these wretches, not fit to live upon the earth, these common harlots, adulterers, murderers. Only learn ye first what that meaneth, "He that hateth his brother is a murderer," 1 John iii. 15. "He that looketh on a woman, to lust after her, hath

committed adultery with her already in his heart," Matthew v. 28. "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not, that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?" James iv. 4.

5. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye" also "must be born again." "Except" ye also "be born again, ye cannot see the kingdom of God." Lean no more on the staff of that broken reed, that ye *were* born again in baptism. Who denies that ye were then made children of God, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven? But, notwithstanding this, ye are now children of the devil. Therefore, ye must be born again. And let not Satan put it into your heart, to cavil at a word, when the thing is clear. Ye have heard, what are the marks of the children of God: all ye who have them not in your souls, baptized or unbaptized, must needs receive them, or without doubt ye will perish everlastingly. And if ye have been baptized, your only hope is this, That those who were made the children of God by baptism, but are now the children of the devil, may yet again receive "power to become the sons of God:" that they may receive again what they have lost, even the "Spirit of Adoption, crying in their hearts, Abba, Father!"

6. Amen, Lord Jesus! May every one who prepareth his heart yet again to seek thy face, receive again that Spirit of Adoption, and cry out, Abba, Father! Let him now again have power, so to believe in thy name as to become the child of God; as to know and feel he hath "redemption in thy blood, even the forgiveness of sins," and that he "cannot commit sin because he is born of God." Let him be now "begotten again unto a living hope," so as to "purify himself, as thou art pure!" And, "because he is a son," let the Spirit of love and of glory, rest upon him, cleansing him "from all filthiness of flesh and spirit," and teaching him to "perfect holiness in the fear of God!"

SERMON XIX.

THE GREAT PRIVILEGE OF THOSE THAT ARE BORN OF GOD.

1 JOHN iii. 9.

"*Whosoever is born of God doth not commit Sin.*"

1. IT has been frequently supposed, that the being born of God was all one with the being justified; that the New-Birth and Justification were only different expressions, denoting the same thing: it being certain on the one hand, that whosoever is justified, is also born of God; and on the other, that whoever is born of God is also justified: yea, that both these gifts of God are given to every believer in one and the same moment. In one point of time his sins are blotted out, and he is born again of God.

2. But though it be allowed, that Justification and the New-Birth are, in point of time, inseparable from each other, yet they are easily distinguished, as being not the same, but things of a widely different nature. Justification implies only a relative, the New-Birth a real change. God, in justifying us, does something *for* us: in begetting us again, he does the work *in* us. The former changes our outward relation to God, so that of enemies we become children. By the latter, our inmost souls are changed, so that of sinners we become saints. The one restores us to the favour, the other to the image of God. The one is, the

taking away the guilt; the other, the taking away the power of sin. So that, although they are joined together in point of time, yet are they of wholly distinct natures.

3. The not discerning this, the not observing the wide difference there is, between being justified and being born again, has occasioned exceeding great confusion of thought, in many who have treated on this subject: particularly when they have attempted to explain this great privilege of the children of God; to shew how "whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin."

4. In order to apprehend this clearly, it may be necessary, First, to consider what is the proper meaning of that expression, *Whosoever is born of God;* and, Secondly, to enquire, in what sense he *doth not commit sin.*

I. 1. First, we are to consider, what is the proper meaning of that expression, "Whosoever is born of God." And, in general, from all the passages of holy Writ, wherein this expression, the being *born of God*, occurs, we may learn that it implies not barely the being baptized, or any outward change whatever; but a vast inward change, a change wrought in the soul, by the operation of the Holy Ghost; a change in the whole manner of our existence; for, from the moment we are *born of God*, we live in quite another manner than we did before; we are, as it were, in another world.

2. The ground and reason of the expression are easy to be understood. When we undergo this great change, we may, with much propriety, be said *to be born again*, because there is so near a resemblance between the circumstances of the natural and of the spiritual birth; so that to consider the circumstances of the natural birth, is the most easy way to understand the spiritual.

3. The child which is not yet born subsists indeed by the air, as does every thing which has life, but *feels* it not, nor any thing else, unless in a very dull and imperfect manner. It *hears* little, if at all, the organs of hearing being as yet closed up. It *sees* nothing, having its eyes fast shut, and being surrounded with utter darkness. There are, it may be,

some faint beginnings of life, when the time of its birth draws nigh; and some motion consequent thereon, whereby it is distinguished from a mere mass of matter. But it has no *senses;* all these avenues of the soul are hitherto quite shut up. Of consequence, it has scarcely any intercourse with this visible world: nor any knowledge, conception, or idea, of the things that occur therein.

4. The reason why he that is not yet born, is wholly a stranger to the visible world, is, not because it is afar off. It is very nigh. It surrounds him on every side. But partly, because he has not those senses, they are not yet opened in his soul, whereby alone it is possible to hold commerce with the material world; and partly, because so thick a veil is cast between, through which he can discern nothing.

5. But no sooner is the child born into the world than he exists in a quite different manner. He now *feels* the air, with which he is surrounded, and which pours into him from every side, as fast as he alternately breathes it back, to sustain the flame of life. And hence springs a continual increase of strength, of motion, and of sensation: all the bodily senses being now awakened, and furnished with their proper objects.

His eyes are now opened to perceive the light, which, silently flowing in upon them, discovers not only itself, but an infinite variety of things, with which before he was wholly unacquainted. His ears are unclosed, and sounds rush in, with endless diversity. Every sense is employed upon such objects as are peculiarly suitable to it. And by these inlets, the soul, having an open intercourse with the visible world, acquires more and more knowledge of sensible things, of all the things which are under the sun.

6. So it is with him that is born of God. Before that great change is wrought, although he subsists by him, in whom all that have life "live, and move, and have their being," yet he is not *sensible* of God; he does not *feel*, he has no inward consciousness of his presence. He does not

perceive that divine breath of life, without which he cannot subsist a moment. Nor is he sensible of any of the things of God. They make no impression upon his soul. God is continually calling to him from on high, but he heareth not; his ears are shut, so that the "voice of the charmer" is lost in him, "charm he ever so wisely." He seeth not the things of the Spirit of God, the eyes of his understanding being closed, and utter darkness covering his whole soul, surrounding him on every side. It is true, he may have some faint dawnings of life, some small beginnings of spiritual motion; but as yet he has no spiritual senses, capable of discerning spiritual objects. Consequently he "discerneth not the things of the Spirit of God. He cannot know them; because they are spiritually discerned."

7. Hence he has scarce any knowledge of the invisible world, as he has scarce any intercourse with it. Not that it is afar off. No: he is in the midst of it: it encompasses him round about. The *other world*, as we usually term it, is not far from any one of us. It is above, and beneath, and on every side. Only the natural man discerneth it not; partly, because he hath no spiritual senses, whereby alone we can discern the things of God; partly, because so thick a veil is interposed, as he knows not how to penetrate.

8. But when he is born of God, born of the Spirit, how is the manner of his existence changed! His whole soul is now sensible of God, and he can say, by sure experience, "Thou art about my bed, and about my path;" I feel thee "in all my ways." Thou besettest me behind and before, and layest thy hand upon me." The Spirit or Breath of God is immediately inspired, breathed into the new-born soul. And the same breath, which comes from, returns to God: as it is continually received by faith, so it is continually rendered back by love, by prayer, and praise, and thanksgiving: love, and praise, and prayer being the breath of every soul which is truly born of God. And by this new kind of spiritual respiration, spiritual life is not only sustained, but increased day by day: together with

spiritual strength, and motion, and sensation. All the senses of the soul being now awake, and capable of *discerning* spiritual *good and evil.*

9. "The eyes of his understanding" are now "open," and he "seeth Him that is invisible." He sees what is "the exceeding greatness of his power," and of his love towards them that believe. He sees that God is merciful to him a sinner, that he is reconciled through the Son of his love. He clearly perceives both the pardoning love of God, and all his "exceeding great and precious promises." "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined," and doth shine, in his heart, to enlighten him with the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." All the darkness is now passed away, and he abides in the light of God's countenance.

10. His ears are now opened, and the voice of God no longer calls in vain. He hears, and obeys the heavenly calling: he "knows the voice of his Shepherd." All his spiritual senses being now awakened, he has a clear intercourse with the invisible world. And hence he knows more and more of the things which before "it could not enter into his heart to conceive." He now knows what the peace of God is: what is joy in the Holy Ghost: what the love of God which is shed abroad in the hearts of them that believe in him through Christ Jesus. Thus the veil being removed, which before interrupted the light and voice, the knowledge and love of God, he who is born of the Spirit, "dwelling in love, dwelleth in God and God in him."

II. 1. Having considered the meaning of that expression, "Whosoever is born of God," it remains in the second place to enquire, in what sense he "doth not commit sin."

Now one who is so born of God as hath been above described, who continually receives into his soul the breath of life from God, the gracious influence of his Spirit, and continually renders it back: one who thus believes and loves; who by faith perceives the continual actings of God upon his spirit; and by a kind of spiritual re-action, re-

turns the grace he receives in unceasing love, and praise, and prayer; not only *doth not commit sin*, while *he* thus *keepeth himself;* but so long as this *seed remaineth in him*, he *cannot sin*, because he is born of God.

2. By *sin*, I here understand, outward sin, according to the plain, common acceptation of the word; an actual, voluntary *transgression of the law:* of the revealed, written law of God: of any commandment of God, acknowledged to be such, at the time that it is transgressed. But "whosoever is born of God," while he abideth in faith and love, and in the spirit of prayer and thanksgiving, not only *doth not*, but *cannot* thus *commit sin*. So long as he thus believeth in God through Christ, and loves him, and is pouring out his heart before him, he cannot voluntarily transgress any command of God, either by speaking or acting what he knows God hath forbidden. So long as that *seed* which *remaineth in him*, that loving, praying, thankful faith compels him to refrain from whatsoever he knows to be an abomination in the sight of God.

3. But here a difficulty will immediately occur; and one that to many has appeared insuperable, and induced them to deny the plain assertion of the Apostle, and give up the privilege of the children of God.

It is plain, in fact, that those whom we cannot deny to have been truly *born of God*, (the Spirit of God having given us in his word, this infallible testimony concerning them) nevertheless, not only could, but did commit sin, even gross, outward sin. They did transgress the plain, known laws of God, speaking or acting what they knew he had forbidden.

4. Thus *David* was unquestionably born of God before he was anointed king over Israel. He knew in whom he had believed; he was strong in faith, giving glory to God. "The Lord, saith he, is my shepherd; therefore can I lack nothing. He shall feed me in green pastures, and lead me forth beside the waters of comfort. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me." Psalm xxxiii. 1, &c. He

was filled with love; such as often constrained him to cry out, "I will love thee, O Lord, my Strength: the Lord is my strong Rock, and my Defence: the Horn also of my salvation, and my Refuge," Psalm xviii. 1, 2. He was a man of prayer, pouring out his soul before God, in all circumstances of life: and abundant in praises and thanksgiving; "Thy praise, saith he, shall be ever in my mouth," xxxiv. 1. "Thou art my God, and I will thank thee; thou art my God, and I will praise thee," cxviii. [illegible] And yet such a child of God could and did commit sin; yea, the horrid sins of adultery and murder.

5. And even after the Holy Spirit was more largely given, after "life and immortality were brought to light by the gospel," we want not instances of the same melancholy kind, which were also doubtless written for our instruction. Thus he who (probably from his *selling* all that he had, and *bringing the price* for the relief of his poor brethren) was *by the Apostles* themselves *sirnamed Barnabas*, that is, *the Son of Consolation*, Acts iv. 36, 37; who was so honoured at Antioch, as to be selected with Paul out of all *the disciples*, to carry their relief *unto the brethren in Judea*, Acts xi. 29; this Barnabas, who at his return from Judea, was by the peculiar direction of the Holy Ghost, solemnly "separated from the other Prophets and Teachers, for the work whereunto God had called him," ch. xiii. 1—4. even to accompany the great Apostle among the Gentiles, and to be his fellow-labourer in every place; nevertheless, was afterwards so *sharp*, chap. xv. 35, 39, in his *contention* with St. Paul (because he "thought it not good to take with them John" in his "visiting the brethren," a second time, "who had departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work") that he himself also departed from the work: that he "took John, and sailed unto Cyprus," Acts xv. 39; forsaking him to whom he had been in so immediate a manner joined by the Holy Ghost.

6. An instance more astonishing than both these, is given by St. Paul in his Epistle to the Galatians. *When Peter,*

the aged, the zealous, the first of the Apostles; one of the three most highly favoured by his Lord; "was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles," the heathens converted to the Christian Faith, as having been peculiarly taught of God, that he "should not call any man common or unclean." But "when they were come, he separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly, according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter, before them all, If thou being a Jew, livest after the manner of the Gentiles," not regarding the ceremonial law of Moses, "why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?" Gal. ii. 11, &c. Here is also plain, undeniable sin committed by one who was undoubtedly *born of God*. But how can this be reconciled with the assertion of St. John, if taken in the obvious literal meaning, That "whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin?"

7. I answer, what has been long observed is this: So long as "he that is born of God keepeth himself," (which he is able to do, by the grace of God) "the wicked one toucheth him not." But if he keep not himself, if he abide not in the faith, he may commit sin even as another man.

It is easy therefore to understand, how any of these children of God might be moved from his own steadfastness, and yet the great truth of God, declared by the Apostle, remain steadfast and unshaken. He did not *keep himself*, by that grace of God which was sufficient for him. He fell, step by step, first, into negative, inward sin, not "stirring up the gift of God which was in him," not "watching unto prayer, not pressing on to the mark of the prize of his high calling:" then into positive inward sin, inclining to wickedness with his heart, giving way to some evil desire or temper. Next, he lost his faith, his sight of a pardoning God, and consequently his love of God. And being then weak and

like another man, he was capable of committing even outward sin.

8. To explain this by a particular instance: David was born of God, and saw God by faith. He loved God in sincerity. He could truly say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth" (neither person nor thing) "that I desire in comparison of thee?" But still there remained in his heart the corruption of nature, which is the seed of all evil.

"He was walking upon the roof of his house," 2 Sam. xi. 2, probably praising the God whom his soul loved, when he looked down, and saw Bathsheba. He felt a temptation, a thought which tended to evil. The Spirit of God did not fail to convince him of this. He doubtless heard and knew the warning voice. But he yielded in some measure to the thought, and the temptation began to prevail over him. Hereby his spirit was sullied; he saw God still; but it was more dimly than before. He loved God still; but not in the same degree, not with the same strength and ardor of affection. Yet God checked him again, though his Spirit was grieved; and his voice, though fainter, and fainter, still whispered, "Sin lieth at the door; look unto me, and be thou saved." But he would not hear. He looked again, not unto God, but unto the forbidden object, till nature was superior to grace, and kindled lust in his soul.

The eye of his mind was now closed again, and God vanished out of his sight. Faith, the divine, supernatural intercourse with God, and the love of God, ceased together. He then rushed on as a horse into the battle, and knowingly committed the outward sin.

9. You see the unquestionable progress from grace to sin. Thus it goes on, from step to step. 1, The divine seed of loving, conquering faith, remains in him that is *born of God. He keepeth himself*, by the grace of God, and *cannot commit sin.* 2, A temptation arises; whether from the world, the flesh, or the devil, it mattters not. 3. The Spirit of God gives him warning that sin is near, and bids

him more abundantly watch unto prayer. 4, He gives way, in some degree, to the temptation, which now begins to grow pleasing to him. 5, The Holy Spirit is grieved: his faith is weakened, and his love of God grows cold. 6, The Spirit reproves him more sharply, and saith, "This is the way; walk thou in it." 7. He turns away from the painful voice of God, and listens to the pleasing voice of the tempter. 8, Evil desire begins and spreads in his soul, till faith and love vanish away. He is then capable of committing outward sin, the power of the Lord being departed from him.

10. To explain this by another instance: The Apostle Peter was full of faith and of the Holy Ghost; and hereby keeping himself, he had a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man.

Walking thus in simplicity and godly sincerity, "before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles," knowing that what God had cleansed, was not common or unclean.

But "when they were come," a temptation arose in his heart, "to fear those of the circumcision," (the Jewish converts, who were zealous for circumcision and the other rites of the Mosaic law) and regard the favour and praise of these men, more than the praise of God.

He was warned by the Spirit when sin was near. Nevertheless, he yielded to it in some degree, even to sinful fear of man, and his faith and love were proportionably weakened.

God reproved him again for giving place to the devil. Yet he would not hearken to the voice of his Shepherd; but gave himself up to that slavish fear, and thereby quenched the Spirit.

Then God disappeared, and faith and love being extinct, he committed the outward sin; *Walking not uprightly:* not "according to the truth of the gospel," he "separated himself" from his Christian brethren, and by his evil example, if not advice also, "compelled even the Gentiles to live after the manner of the Jews;" to entangle themselves

again with that "yoke of bondage," from which "Christ had set them free."

Thus it is unquestionably true, that he who is born of God, keeping himself, doth not, cannot commit sin; and yet, if he keep not himself, he may commit all manner of sin with greediness.

III. 1. From the preceding Considerations we may learn, first, To give a clear and incontestable answer to a question which has frequently perplexed many, who were sincere of heart. Does sin precede or follow the loss of faith? Does a child of God first commit sin, and thereby lose his faith? Or does he lose his faith first, before he can commit sin?

I answer, some sin of omission at least, must necessarily precede the loss of faith: some inward sin. But the loss of faith must precede the committing outward sin.

The more any believer examines his own heart, the more will he be convinced of this: that *faith working by love*, excludes both inward and outward sin from a soul *watching unto prayer*: that nevertheless we are even then liable to temptation, particularly to the sin that did easily beset us: that if the loving eye of the soul be steadily fixed on God, the temptation soon vanishes away; but if not, if we are εξελκομενοι (as the Apostle James speaks, chap. i. 14) *drawn out* of God by our *own desire*, and δελεαζομενοι *caught* by *the bait* of present or promised pleasures: and that *desire conceived* in us, *brings forth sin;* and having by that inward sin destroyed our faith, it casts us headlong into the snare of the devil, so that we may commit any outward sin whatever.

2. From what has been said, we may learn, secondly, What the life of God in the soul of a believer is; wherein it properly consists; and what is immediately and necessarily implied therein. It immediately and necessarily implies, the continual inspiration of God's Holy Spirit: God's breathing into the soul, and the soul's breathing back what it first receives from God: a continual action of God upon the soul, and a re-action of the soul upon God: an unceasing presence of God, the loving, pardoning God, manifested to the heart,

and perceived by faith: an unceasing return of love, praise, and prayer, offering up all the thoughts of our hearts, all the words of our tongues, all the works of our hands, all our body, soul, and spirit, to be an holy sacrifice, acceptable unto God in Christ Jesus.

3. And hence we may, thirdly, infer, the absolute necessity of this re-action of the soul, (whatsoever it be called) in order to the continuance of the divine life therein. For it plainly appears, God does not continue to act upon the soul, unless the soul re-acts upon God. He prevents us indeed with the blessings of his goodness. He first loves us, and manifests himself unto us. While we are yet afar off, he call us to himself, and shines upon our hearts. But if we do not then love him who first loved us, if we will not hearken to his voice; if we turn our eye away from him, and will not attend to the light which he pours in upon us; his Spirit will not always strive; he will gradually withdraw, and leave us to the darkness of our own hearts. He will not continue to breathe into our soul, unless our soul breathes towards him again; unless our love, and prayer, and thanksgiving return to him, a sacrifice wherewith he is well-pleased.

4. Let us learn, lastly, to follow that direction of the great Apostle, "Be not high-minded, but fear." Let us fear sin, more than death or hell. Let us have a jealous (though not painful) fear, lest we should lean to our own deceitful hearts, "Let him that standeth take heed lest he fall." Even he who now standeth fast in the grace of God, in the *faith* that *overcometh the world*, may nevertheless fall into inward sin, and thereby "make shipwreck of his faith." And how easily then will outward sin regain its dominion over him! Thou therefore, O man of God! watch always; that thou mayest always hear the Voice of God. Watch, that thou mayest pray without ceasing, at all times, and in all places, pouring out thy heart before him. So shalt thou always believe, and always love, and never commit sin.

SERMON XX.

ON ORIGINAL SIN.

GENESIS vi. 5.

"*And God saw that the Wickedness of Man was great in the Earth, and that every Imagination of the Thoughts of his Heart was only evil continually.*"

1. HOW widely different is this from the fair pictures of human nature, which men have drawn in all ages! The writings of many of the ancients abound with gay descriptions of the dignity of man: whom some of them paint as having all virtue and happiness in his composition, or at least, entirely in his power, without being beholden to any other being, yea, as self-sufficient, able to live on his own stock, and little inferior to God himself.

2. Nor have heathens alone, men who were guided in their researches by little more than the dim light of reason, but many likewise of them that bear the name of Christ, and to whom are entrusted the Oracles of God, spoke as magnificently concerning the nature of man, as if it were all innocence and perfection. Accounts of this kind have particularly abounded in the present century: and perhaps in no part of the world more, than in our own country. Here not a few persons of strong understanding, as well as extensive learning, have employed their utmost abilities to shew, what they termed, "The fair side of human nature." And it must be acknowledged, that if their accounts of him

be just, man is still but "a little lower than the angels," or, as the words may be more literally rendered, "a little less than God."

3. Is it any wonder, that these accounts are very readily received by the generality of men? For who is not easily persuaded to think favourably of himself? Accordingly, writers of this kind are most universally read, admired, applauded. And innumerable are the converts they have made, not only in the gay, but the learned world. So that it is now quite unfashionable to talk otherwise, to say any thing to the disparagement of human nature: which is generally allowed, notwithstanding a few infirmities, to be very innocent, and wise, and virtuous!

4. But, in the mean time, what must we do with our Bibles; for they will never agree with this. These accounts, however pleasing to flesh and blood, are utterly irreconcilable with the scriptural. The Scripture avers, That, "by one man's disobedience, all men were constituted sinners:" that, "in Adam all died," spiritually died, lost the life and the image of God: that fallen, sinful Adam then "begat a son in his own likeness:" nor was it possible he should beget him in any other: for "who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" That consequently *we*, as well as other men, "were, by nature, dead in trespasses and sins, without hope, without God in the world," and therefore "children of wrath:" that every man may say, "I was shapen in wickedness, and in sin did my mother conceive me:" that "there is no difference, in that all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God:" of that glorious image of God, wherein man was originally created. And hence, when "the Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, he saw they were all gone out of the way, they were altogether become abominable, there was none righteous, no, not one;" none that truly sought after God: just agreeable this, to what is declared by the Holy Ghost in the words above recited, "God saw," when he looked down from heaven before, "that the wickedness of man was great in

the earth!" so great, that "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

This is God's account of man: from which I shall take occasion, first, To shew what men were before the Flood: Secondly, To enquire, Whether they are not the same now? And, Thirdly, To add some inferences.

I. 1. I am, first, by opening the words of the text to shew, what men were before the Flood. And we may fully depend on the account here given. For God saw it, and he cannot be deceived. He "saw that the wickedness of man was great." Not of this or that man; not of a few men only; not barely of the greater part, but of *man in general*, of men universally. The word includes the whole human race, every partaker of human nature. And it is not easy for us to compute their numbers, to tell how many thousands and millions they were. The earth then retained much of its primeval beauty and original fruitfulness. The face of the globe was not rent and torn, as it is now: and spring and summer went hand in hand. It is therefore probable, it afforded sustenance for far more inhabitants than it is now capable of sustaining; and these must be immensely multiplied, while men begat sons and daughters for seven or eight hundred years together. Yet, among all this inconceivable number, *only* Noah *found favour with God.* He alone (perhaps including part of his household) was an exception from the universal wickedness which, by the just judgment of God, in a short time after brought on universal destruction. All the rest were partakers in the same guilt as they were in the same punishment.

2. "God saw all the imaginations of the thoughts of his heart:" of his soul, his inward man, the spirit within him, the principle of all his inward and outward motions. He *saw all the imaginations.* It is not possible to find a word of a more extensive signification. It includes whatever is formed, made, fabricated within; all that is, or passes in the soul; every inclination, affection, passion, appetite; every temper, design, thought. It must of consequence include every word and action, as naturally flowing from these foun-

tains: and being either good or evil, according to the fountain from which they severally flow.

3. Now God *saw that all* this, the whole thereof *was evil*, contrary to moral rectitude; contrary to the nature of God, which necessarily includes all good; contrary to the divine Will, the eternal standard of good and evil: contrary to the pure, holy image of God, wherein man was originally created, and wherein he stood when God surveying the works of his hands, saw them *all* to be *very good;* contrary to justice, mercy, and truth, and to the essential relations which each man bore to his Creator and his fellow creatures.

4. But was there not good mingled with the evil? Was there not light intermixed with the darkness? None at all: "God saw that the whole imagination of the heart of man was only evil." It cannot indeed be denied, but many of them, perhaps all, had good motions put into their hearts. For the Spirit of God did then also "strive with man," if haply he might repent, more especially during that gracious reprieve, the hundred and twenty years, while the ark was preparing. But still "in his flesh dwelt no good thing;" all his nature was purely evil. It was wholly consistent with itself, and unmixed with any thing of an opposite nature.

5. However, it may still be matter of enquiry, "Was there no intermission of this evil? Were there no lucid intervals, wherein something good might be found in the heart of man?" We are not here to consider, what the grace of God might occasionally work in his soul. And abstracting from this, we have no reason to believe, there was any intermission of that evil. For God who "saw the whole imagination of the thoughts of his heart to be *only* evil," saw likewise, that it was always the same, that it "was only evil continually:" every year, every day, every hour, every moment. He never deviated into good.

II. Such is the authentic account of the whole race of mankind, which he, who knoweth what is in man, who searcheth the heart and trieth the reins, hath left upon record for

our instruction. Such were all men before God brought the flood upon the earth. We are, secondly, to enquire, whether they are the same now?

1. And this is certain, the Scriptures give us no reason to think any otherwise of them. On the contrary, all the above-cited passages of Scripture, refer to those who lived after the Flood. It was above a thousand years after, that God declared by David concerning the children of men, "They are all gone out of the way" of truth and holiness, "there is none righteous, no, not one." And to this bear all the prophets witness in their several generations. So Isaiah, concerning God's peculiar people, (and certainly the Heathens were in no better condition,) "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot, even unto the head, there is no soundness, but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores." The same account is given by all the Apostles, yea, by the whole tenor of the Oracles of God. From all these we learn, concerning man in his natural state, unassisted by the grace of God, that "all the imaginations of the thoughts of his heart are [still] evil, only evil [and that] continually."

2. And this account of the present state of man is confirmed by daily experience. It is true, the natural man discerns it not: and this is not to be wondered at. So long as a man, born blind, continues so, he is scarcely sensible of his want. Much less (could we suppose a place where all were born without sight) would they be sensible of the want of it. In like manner, so long as men remain in their natural blindness of understanding, they are not sensible of their spiritual wants, and of this in particular. But as soon as God opens the eyes of their understanding, they see the state they were in before; they are then deeply convinced, that *every man living*, themselves especially, are, by nature, *altogether vanity*, that is, folly and ignorance, sin and wickedness.

3. We see, when God opens our eyes, that we were before Αθεοι εν τω κοσμω, *without God*, or rather, *Atheists in the world*. We had, by nature, no knowledge of God, no ac-

quaintance with him. It is true, as soon as we came to the use of reason, we learned "the invisible things of God, even his eternal power and Godhead, from the things that are made." From the things that are seen, we inferred the existence of an eternal, powerful Being, that is not seen. But still, although we acknowledged his existence, we had no acquaintance with him. As we know there is an Emperor of China, whom yet we do not know; so we knew there was a King of all the earth; yet we knew him not. Indeed, we could not, by any of our natural faculties. By none of these could we attain the knowledge of God. We could no more perceive him by our natural understanding, than we could see him with our eyes. For "no one knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son willeth to reveal him. And no one knoweth the Son but the Father, and he to whom the Father revealeth him."

4. We read of an ancient King, who, being desirous to know what was the *natural language* of men, in order to bring the matter to a certain issue, made the following experiment. He ordered two infants, as soon as they were born, to be conveyed to a place prepared for them, where they were brought up without any instruction at all, and without ever hearing a human voice. And what was the event? Why, that when they were at length brought out of their confinement, they spake no language at all, they uttered only inarticulate sounds, like those of other animals. Were two infants in like manner to be brought up from the womb, without being instructed in any religion, there is little room to doubt, but (unless the grace of God interposed) the event would be just the same. They would have no religion at all: they would have no more knowledge of God than the beasts of the field, than the wild ass's colt. Such is *natural religion!* Abstracted from traditional, and from the influences of God's Spirit.

5. And having no knowledge, we can have no love of God; we cannot love him we know not. Most men *talk* indeed of loving God, and perhaps imagine they do. At least, few will acknowledge they do not love him: but the

fact is too plain to be denied. No man loves God by nature, any more than he does a stone or the earth he treads upon. What we love, we delight in: but no man has naturally any delight in God. In our natural state we cannot conceive how any one should delight in him. We take no pleasure in him at all; he is utterly tasteless to us. To love God! It is far above, out of our sight. We cannot, naturally, attain unto it.

6. We have, by nature, not only no love, but no fear of God. It is allowed, indeed, that most men have, sooner or later, a kind of senseless, irrational fear, properly called *Superstition*, though the blundering Epicureans gave it the name of Religion. Yet even this is not natural, but acquired: chiefly by conversation or from example. By nature, God *is not in all our thoughts:* we leave him to manage his own affairs, to sit quietly, as we imagine, in heaven, and leave us on earth to manage ours. So that we have no more of the fear of God before our eyes, than of the love of God in our hearts.

7. Thus are all men *Atheists in the world.* But atheism itself does not screen us from idolatry. In his natural state every man born into the world is a rank idolater. Perhaps, indeed, we may not be such in the vulgar sense of the word. We do not, like the idolatrous Heathens, worship molten or graven images. We do not bow down to the stock of a tree, to the work of our own hands. We do not pray to the angels or saints in heaven, any more than to the saints that are upon earth. But what then? We have set up our idols in our hearts; and to these we bow down and worship them: we worship ourselves, when we pay that honour to ourselves which is due to God only. Therefore all pride is idolatry: it is ascribing to ourselves what is due to God alone. And although pride was not made for man, yet where is the man that is born without it? But hereby we rob God of his unalienable right, and idolatrously usurp his glory.

8. But pride is not the only sort of idolatry which we are all by nature guilty of. Satan has stamped his own image on our hearts in self-will also. *I will*, said he, before he was

cast out of heaven, "I will sit upon the sides of the North." I will do my own will and pleasure, independantly on that of my Creator. The same does every man born into the world say, and that in a thousand instances. Nay, and avow it too, without ever blushing upon the account, without either fear or shame. Ask the man, "Why did you do this?" He answers, "Because I had a mind to it." What is this but, "Because it was my will;" that is in effect, because the devil and I are agreed: because Satan and I govern our actions, by one and the same principle. The will of God, mean time, is not in his thoughts, is not considered in the least degree: although it be the supreme rule of every intelligent creature, whether in heaven or earth, resulting from the essential, unalterable relation, which all creatures bear to their Creator.

9. So far we bear the image of the devil, and tread in his steps. But at the next step we leave Satan behind, we run into an idolatry whereof he is not guilty: I mean, Love of the world, which is now as natural to every man, as to love his own will. What is more natural to us, than to seek happiness in the creature, instead of the Creator? To seek that satisfaction in the works of his hands, which can be found in God only? What more natural than the desire of the flesh? That is, of the pleasure of sense in every kind? Men indeed talk magnificently of despising these low pleasures, particularly men of learning and education. They affect to sit loose to the gratification of those appetites, wherein they stand on a level with the beasts that perish. But it is mere affectation; for every man is conscious to himself, that in this respect he is, by nature, a very beast. Sensual appetites, even those of the lowest kind, have, more or less, the dominion over him. They lead him captive; they drag him to and fro, in spite of his boasted reason. The man, with all his good-breeding and other accomplishments, has no pre-eminence over the goat: nay, it is much to be doubted, whether the beast has not the pre-eminence over him. Certainly he has, if we may hearken to one of their modern oracles, who very decently tells us,

"Once in a season, beasts too taste of love;
Only the beast of reason is its slave,
And in that folly drudges all the year."

A considerable difference indeed, it must be allowed, there is between man and man, arising (beside that wrought by preventing grace) from difference of constitution and education. But, notwithstanding this, who, that is not utterly ignorant of himself, can here cast the first stone at another? Who can abide the test of our blessed Lord's comment on the Seventh Commandment? "He that looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart?" So that one knows not which to wonder at most, the ignorance or the insolence of those men, who speak with such disdain of them that are overcome by desires, which every man has felt in his own breast! The desire of every pleasure of sense, innocent or not, being natural to every child of man.

10. And so is *the desire of the eye*, the desire of the pleasures of the imagination. These arise either from great, or beautiful, or uncommon objects: if the two former do not coincide with the latter; for, perhaps it would appear upon a diligent enquiry, that neither *grand* nor *beautiful* objects please, any longer than they are *new:* that, when the novelty of them is over, the greatest part, at least, of the pleasure they give, is over; and, in the same proportion as they become familiar, they become flat and insipid. But let us experience this ever so often, the same desire will remain still. The inbred thirst continues fixed in the soul: nay the more it is indulged, the more it increases, and incites us to follow after another, and yet another object; although we leave every one with an abortive hope, and a deluded expectation. Yea,

"The hoary fool, who many days
Has struggl'd with continued sorrow,
Renews his hope, and fondly lays
The desperate bet upon to-morrow!

"To-morrow comes! 'Tis noon! 'Tis night!
This day, like all the former, flies:
Yet, on he goes, to seek delight:
To-morrow, till to-night he dies!"

11. A third symptom of this fatal disease, the love of the world, which is so deeply rooted in our nature, is *the pride of life*, the desire of praise, of the honour that cometh of men. This the greatest admirers of human nature allow to be strictly natural: as natural as the sight or hearing, or any other of the external senses. And are they ashamed of it, even men of letters, men of refined and improved understanding? So far from it, that they glory therein! they applaud themselves for their love of applause! Yea, eminent Christians, so called, make no difficulty of adopting the saying of the old, vain Heathen, "*Animi dissoluti est et nequam negligere quid de se homines sentiant:*" "Not to regard what men think of us, is the mark of a wicked and abandoned mind." So, that to go calm and unmoved through honour and dishonour, through evil report and good report, is with them a sign of one that is indeed not fit to live: away with such a fellow from the earth. But, would one imagine that these men had ever heard of Jesus Christ or his Apostles? Or that they knew who it was that said, "How can ye believe, who receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour which cometh of God only?" But, if this be really so, if it be impossible to believe, and consequently to please God, so long as we receive or seek honour one of another, and seek not the honour which cometh of God only: then, in what a condition are all mankind! The Christians as well as Heathens! Since they all seek honour one of another! Since it is as natural for them so to do, themselves being the judges, as it is to see the light which strikes upon their eye, or to hear the sound which enters their ear: yea, since they account it the sign of a virtuous mind, to seek the praise of men; and of a vicious one, to be content with the honour that cometh of God only!

III. 1. I proceed to draw a few inferences from what has been said. And first, from hence we learn one grand, fundamental difference between Christianity, considered as a system of doctrines, and the most refined heathenism. Many of the ancient Heathens have largely described the vices of particular men. They have spoken much against their covetousness or cruelty, their luxury or prodigality. Some have dared to say, that "no man is born, without vices of one kind or another." But still, as none of them were apprised of the fall of man, so none of them knew his total corruption. They knew not, that all men were empty of all good, and filled with all manner of evil. They were wholly ignorant of the entire depravation of the whole human nature, of every man born into the world, in every faculty of his soul, not so much by those particular vices, which reign in particular persons, as by the general flood of atheism and idolatry, of pride, self-will, and love of the world. This, therefore, is the first, grand, distinguishing point between heathenism and christianity. The one acknowledges, that many men are infected with many vices, and even born with a proneness to them; but supposes withal, that in some the natural good much over-balances the evil. The other declares, that all men are *conceived in sin*, and *shapen in wickedness:* that hence there is in every man a *carnal mind, which is enmity against God, which is not, cannot be subject to* his *law*, and which so infects the whole soul, that *there dwelleth in* him, *in his flesh*, in his natural state, *no good thing;* but *all the imagination of the thoughts of his heart*, is *evil*, only *evil*, and that *continually*.

2. Hence we may, secondly, learn, that all who deny this, call it Original Sin, or by any other title, are but Heathens still, in the fundamental point which differences heathenism from christianity. They may indeed allow, that men have many vices: that some are born with us: and, that consequently we are not born altogether so wise or so virtuous as we should be: there being few that will roundly affirm, "We are born with as much propensity to good as

to evil, and that every man is, by nature, as virtuous and wise as Adam was at his creation." But here is the shibboleth: Is man by nature filled with all manner of evil? Is he void of all good? Is he wholly fallen? Is his soul totally corrupted? Or, to come back to the text, is "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart evil continually?" Allow this, and you are so far a Christian. Deny it, and you are but a heathen still.

3. We may learn from hence, in the third place, what is the proper nature of Religion, of the Religion of Jesus Christ. It is Θεραπεια Ψυχης, God's method of healing a soul which is thus diseased. Hereby the great Physician of souls applies medicines to heal this sickness; to restore human nature, totally corrupted in all its faculties. God heals our atheism, by the knowledge of himself, and of Jesus Christ whom he hath sent; by giving us faith, a divine evidence and conviction of God, and of the things of God: in particular, of this important truth, Christ loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*. By repentance and lowliness of heart, the deadly disease of pride is healed: that of self-will by resignation, a meek and thankful submission to the will of God. And for the love of the world in all its branches, the love of God is the sovereign remedy. Now this is properly Religion, *faith* thus *working by love*, working the genuine meek humility, entire deadness to the world, with a loving, thankful acquiescence in, and conformity to, the whole will and word of God.

4. Indeed, if man were not thus fallen, there would be no need of all this. There would be no occasion for this work in the heart, this "renewal in the spirit of our mind." The *superfluity of godliness* would then be a more proper expression than the *superfluity of naughtiness*. For an outside religion, without any godliness at all, would suffice to all rational intents and purposes. It does accordingly suffice, in the judgment of those who deny this corruption of our nature. They make very little more of religion than the famous Mr. Hobbes did of reason. According to him, Reason is only "A well-ordered train of words:" according to

them, Religion is only a well-ordered train of words and actions. And they speak consistently with themselves: for, if the inside be not *full of wickedness*, if this be clean already, what remains, but to *cleanse the outside of the cup?* Outward reformation, if their supposition be just, is indeed the one thing needful.

5. But ye have not so learned the Oracles of God. Ye know, that he who seeth what is in man, gives a far different account both of nature and grace, of our fall and our recovery. Ye know that the great end of Religion is, to renew our hearts in the image of God, to repair that total loss of righteousness and true holiness, which we sustained by the sin of our first parents. Ye know that all religion which does not answer this end, all that stops short of this, the renewal of our soul in the image of God, after the likeness of him that created it, is no other than a poor farce, and a mere mockery of God, to the destruction of our own souls. O beware of those teachers of lies, who would palm this upon you for Christianity! Regard them not, although they should come unto you with all the deceivableness of unrighteousness, with all smoothness of language, all decency, yea beauty and elegance of expression, all professions of earnest good-will to you, and reverence for the Holy Scriptures. Keep to the plain, old faith, "*once delivered to the saints*," and delivered by the Spirit of God to our hearts. Know your disease! Know your cure! Ye were born in sin: therefore "ye must be born again," born of God. By nature ye are wholly corrupted: by grace ye shall be wholly renewed. *In* Adam ye *all died:* in the second Adam, "in Christ, ye all are made alive." "You that were dead in sins hath he quickened:" he hath already given you a principle of life, even *faith in* him *who loved* you, *and gave himself for* you! Now, "go on from faith to faith," until your whole sickness be healed, and all that "mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus!"

SERMON XXI.

ON THE NEW-BIRTH.

JOHN iii. 7.

"*Ye must be born again.*"

1. IF any doctrine, within the whole compass of christianity, may be properly termed fundamental, they are, doubtless, these two, the doctrine of Justification, and that of the New-Birth: the former, relating to that great work, which God does *for us*, in forgiving our sins; the latter, to the great work, which God does *in us*, in renewing our fallen nature. In order of time, neither of these is before the other: in the moment we are justified by the grace of God, through the redemption that is in Jesus, we are also *born of the Spirit:* but, in order of thinking, as it is termed, Justification precedes the New-Birth. We first conceive his wrath to be turned away, and then his Spirit to work in our hearts.

2. How great importance then must it be of to every child of man, thoroughly to understand these fundamental doctrines? From a full conviction of this, many excellent men have written very largely concerning Justification, explaining every point relating thereto, and opening the Scriptures which treat upon it. Many likewise have written on the New-Birth: and some of them largely enough: but yet not

so clearly as might have been desired: nor so deeply and accurately: having either given a dark, abstruse account of it, or a slight and superficial one. Therefore a full, and, at the same time, a clear account of the New-Birth, seems to be wanting still; such as may enable us to give a satisfactory answer to these three questions. First, Why must we be born again? What is the foundation of this doctrine of the New-Birth? Secondly, How must we be born again? What is the nature of the New-Birth? And, Thirdly, Wherefore must we be born again? To what end is it necessary? These questions, by the assistance of God, I shall briefly and plainly answer, and then subjoin a few inferences which will naturally follow.

I. 1. And first, Why must we be born again? What is the foundation of this doctrine? The foundation of it lies nearly as deep as the creation of the world: in the scriptural account whereof we read, "And God," the Three-One God, "said, Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him," Gen. i. 26, 27: not barely in his *natural image*, a picture of his own immortality, a spiritual being, endued with understanding, freedom of will, and various affections: nor merely in his *political image*, the governor of this lower world, having "dominion over the fishes of the sea, and over all the earth:" but chiefly in his *moral image*, which, according to the Apostle, is "righteousness and true holiness," Eph. iv. 24. In this image of God was man made. "God is love:" accordingly man at his creation was full of love: which was the sole principle of all his tempers, thoughts, words, and actions. God is full of justice, mercy, and truth: so was man as he came from the hands of his Creator. God is spotless purity: and so man was in the beginning pure from every sinful blot. Otherwise God could not have pronounced him, as well as all the other works of his hands, "very good," Gen. i. 21. This he could not have been, had he not been pure from sin, and filled with righteousness and true holiness. For there is no medium: if we suppose an intelligent

creature, not to love God, not to be righteous and holy, we necessarily suppose him not to be good at all; much less to be *very good.*

2. But, although man was made in the image of God, yet he was not made immutable. This would have been inconsistent with that state of trial in which God was pleased to place him. He was therefore created able to stand, and yet liable to fall. And this God himself apprized him of, and gave him a solemn warning against it. Nevertheless, *man* did *not abide in honour:* he fell from his high estate. He "ate of the tree whereof the Lord had commanded him, Thou shalt not eat thereof." By this wilful act of disobedience to his Creator, this flat rebellion against his Sovereign, he openly declared, that he would no longer have God to rule over him: that he would be governed by his own will, and not the will of him that created him, and that he would not seek his happiness in God, but in the world, in the works of his hands. Now God had told him before, "In the day that thou eatest of that fruit thou shalt surely die." And the word of the Lord cannot be broken. Accordingly, in that day he did die: he died to God, the most dreadful of all deaths. He lost the life of God: he was separated from him, in union with whom his spiritual life consisted. The body dies, when it is separated from the soul; the soul, when it is separated from God. But this separation from God, Adam sustained in the day, the hour, he ate of the forbidden fruit. And of this he gave immediate proof; presently shewing, by his behaviour, that the love of God was extinguished in his soul, which was now "alienated from the life of God." Instead of this, he was now under the power of servile fear, so that he fled from the presence of the Lord. Yea, so little did he retain even of the knowledge of him, who filleth heaven and earth, that he endeavoured to "hide himself from the Lord God, among the trees of the garden," Gen. iii. 8. So had he lost both the knowledge and the love of God, without which the image of God could not subsist. Of this therefore he was deprived at the same time, and became unholy as well as unhappy. In the room

of this, he had sunk into pride and self-will, the very image of the devil; and into sensual appetites and desires, the image of the beasts that perish.

3. If it be said, "Nay, but that threatening, 'In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die,' refers to temporal death and that alone, to the death of the body only;" the answer is plain; to affirm this, is flatly and palpably to make God a liar; to aver, that the God of truth positively affirmed a thing contrary to truth. For, it is evident, Adam did not *die* in this sense, "in the day that he ate thereof." He lived in the sense opposite to this death, above nine hundred years after. So that this cannot possibly be understood of the death of the body, without impeaching the veracity of God. It must therefore be understood of spiritual death, the loss of the life and the image of God.

4. And, "in Adam all died," all human-kind, all the children of men who were then in Adam's loins. The natural consequence of this is, that every one descended from him, comes into the world spiritually dead, dead to God, wholly *dead in sin:* entirely void of the life of God, void of the image of God, of all that *righteousness and holiness*, wherein Adam was created. Instead of this, every man born into the world, now bears the image of the devil, in pride and self-will; the image of the beast, in sensual appeties and desires. This then is the foundation of the New-Birth, the entire corruption of our nature. Hence it is, that being "born in sin," we must be "born again." Hence every one that is born of a woman, must be born of the Spirit of God.

II. 1. But how must a man be born again? What is the nature of the New-Birth? This is the second question. And a question it is of the highest moment that can be conceived. We ought not therefore, in so weighty a concern, to be content with a slight enquiry; but to examine it with all possible care; and to ponder it in our hearts, till we fully understand this important point, and clearly see, how we are to be born again.

2. Not that we are to expect any minute, philosophical account of the manner how this is done. Our Lord sufficiently guards us against any such expectation, by the words immediately following the text: wherein he reminds Nicodemus of as indisputable a fact, as any in the whole compass of nature; which, notwithstanding, the wisest man under the sun is not able fully to explain. "The wind bloweth where it listeth," not by thy power, or wisdom, "and thou hearest the sound thereof:" thou art absolutely assured, beyond all doubt, that it doth blow: "but thou canst not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth." The precise manner how it begins and ends, rises and falls, no man can tell. "So is every one that is born of the Spirit." Thou mayest be as absolutely assured of the fact, as of the blowing of the wind: but the precise manner how it is done, how the Holy Spirit works this in the soul, neither thou, nor the wisest of the children of men, is able to explain.

3. However, it suffices for every rational and Christian purpose, that, without descending into curious, critical enquiries, we can give a plain scriptural account of the nature of the New-Birth. This will satisfy every reasonable man, who desires only the salvation of his soul. The expression, being *born again*, was not first used by our Lord in his conversation with Nicodemus. It was well known before that time, and was in common use among the Jews when our Saviour appeared among them. When an adult Heathen was convinced, that the Jewish religion was of God, and desired to join therein, it was the custom to baptize him first, before he was admitted to circumcision. And when he was baptized, he was said to be *born again:* by which they meant, that he who was before a child of the devil, was now adopted into the family of God, and accounted one of his children. This expression therefore, which Nicodemus, being "a teacher in Israel," ought to have understood well, our Lord uses in conversing with him; only in a stronger sense than he was accustomed to. And this might be the reason of his asking, "How can these things be?" They cannot be literally. "A man cannot enter a second time into

his mother's womb, and be born." But they may, spiritually. A man may be "born from above, born of God, born of the Spirit:" in a manner which bears a very near analogy to the natural birth.

4. Before a child is born into the world, he has eyes, but sees not; he has ears, but does not hear. He has a very imperfect use of every other sense. He has no knowledge of any of the things of the world, or any natural understanding. To that manner of existence which he then has, we do not even give the name of life. It is then only when a man is born, that we say, he begins to live. For, as soon as he is born, he begins to see the light, and the various objects with which he is encompassed. His ears are then opened, and he hears the sounds which successively strike upon them. At the same time, all the other organs of sense begin to be exercised upon their proper objects. He likewise breathes and lives, in a manner, wholly different from what he did before. How exactly doth the parallel hold in all these instances? While a man is in a mere natural state, before he is born of God, he has, in a spiritual sense, eyes and sees not; a thick impenetrable veil lies upon them. He has ears, but hears not; he is utterly deaf to what he is most of all concerned to hear. His other spiritual senses are all locked up: he is in the same condition as if he had them not. Hence he has no knowledge of God, no intercourse with him; he is not at all acquainted with him. He has no true knowledge of the things of God, either of spiritual or eternal things. Therefore, though he is a living man, he is a dead Christian. But, as soon as he is born of God, there is a total change in all these particulars. The "eyes of his understanding are opened," (such is the language of the great Apostle:) and he, who of old "commanded light to shine out of darkness, shining on his heart, he sees the light of the glory of God," his glorious love, "in the face of Jesus Christ." His ears being opened, he is now capable of hearing the inward voice of God, saying, "Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee:" "go and sin no more." This is the purport of what God speaks to his heart: although

perhaps not in these very words. He is now ready to hear whatsoever "he that teacheth man knowledge," is pleased, from time to time, to reveal to him. He "feels in his heart (to use the language of our Church) the mighty working of the Spirit of God:" not in a gross, carnal sense, as the men of the world stupidly and wilfully misunderstand the expression: though they have been told again and again, we mean thereby neither more nor less than this: he feels, is inwardly sensible of the graces, which the Spirit of God works in his heart. He feels, he is conscious of a "peace which passeth all understanding." He many times feels such a joy in God, as is "unspeakable, and full of glory." He feels the "love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto him." And all his spiritual senses are then exercised to discern spiritual good and evil. By the use of these, he is daily increasing in the knowledge of God, of Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, and of all the things pertaining to his inward kingdom. And now he may be properly said *to live*: God having quickened him by his Spirit, he is alive to God through Jesus Christ. He lives a life which the world knoweth not of, a "*life which is hid with Christ in God.*" God is continually breathing, as it were, upon the soul, and his soul is breathing unto God. Grace is descending into his heart, and prayer and praise ascending to heaven. And by this intercourse between God and man, this fellowship with the Father and the Son, as by a kind of spiritual respiration, the life of God in the soul is sustained: and the child of God grows up, till he comes to the "full measure of the stature of Christ."

5. From hence it manifestly appears, what is the nature of the New Birth. It is that great change which God works in the soul, when he brings it into life; when he raises it from the death of sin, to the life of righteousness. It is the change wrought in the whole soul by the Almighty Spirit of God, when it is "created anew in Christ Jesus," when it is "renewed after the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness;" when the love of the world is

changed into the love of God, pride into humility, passion into meekness; hatred, envy, malice, into a sincere, tender, disinterested love for all mankind. In a word, it is that change whereby the earthly, sensual, devilish mind, is turned into the "mind which was in Christ Jesus." This is the nature of the New-Birth. "So is every one that is born of the Spirit."

III. 1. It is not difficult for any who has considered these things, to see the necessity of the New-Birth, and to answer the third question, 'Wherefore, to what end is it necessary that we should be born again?' It is very easily discerned, that this is necessary, first, in order to holiness. For what is holiness, according to the Oracles of God? Not a bare external religion, a round of outward duties, how many soever they be, and how exactly soever performed. No: gospel-holiness is no less than the image of God stamped upon the heart. It is no other than the whole mind which was in Christ Jesus. It consists of all heavenly affections and tempers mingled together in one. It implies such a continual, thankful love, to him who hath not withheld from us his Son, his only Son, as makes it natural, and in a manner necessary to us, to love every child of man; as fills us with "bowels of mercy, kindness, gentleness, long-suffering." It is such a love of God as teaches us to be blameless in all manner of conversation; as enables us to present our souls and bodies, all we are, and all we have, all our thoughts, words, and actions, a continual sacrifice to God, acceptable through Christ Jesus. Now this holiness can have no existence, till we are renewed in the spirit of our mind. It cannot commence in the soul, till that change be wrought, till by the power of the Highest overshadowing us, we are "brought from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God:" that is, till we are born again; which therefore is absolutely necessary in order to holiness.

2. But "without holiness no man shall see the Lord," shall see the face of God in glory. Of consequence, the New-Birth is absolutely necessary, in order to eternal salvation. Men may indeed flatter themselves (so desperately

wicked and so deceitful is the heart of man!) that they may live in their sins till they come to the last gasp, and yet afterwards live with God. And thousands do really believe, that they have found a *broad way which leadeth not to destruction.* "What danger, (say they,) can a woman be in that is so *harmless* and so *virtuous?* What fear is there that so *honest* a man, one of so strict *morality*, should miss of heaven? Especially, if over and above all this, they constantly attend on the church and sacrament." One of these will ask with all assurance, "What, shall I not do as well as my neighbours?" Yes, as well as your unholy neighbours; as well as your neighbours that die in their sins. For you will all drop into the pit together, into the nethermost hell. You will all lie together in the lake of fire, "the lake of fire burning with brimstone." Then, at length you will see (but God grant you may see it before!) the necessity of holiness in order to glory: and consequently of the New-Birth, since none can be holy, except he be born again.

3. For the same reason, except he be born again, none can be happy even in this world. For it is not possible, in the nature of things, that a man should be happy who is not holy. Even the poor, ungodly poet could tell us, *Nemo malus felix:* No wicked man is happy. The reason is plain. All unholy tempers are uneasy tempers. Not only malice, hatred, envy, jealousy, revenge, create a present hell in the breast, but even the softer passions, if not kept within due bounds, give a thousand times more pain than pleasure. Even *hope*, when *deferred*, (and how often must this be the case?) *maketh the heart sick.* And every desire which is not according to the will of God, is liable to "pierce us through with many sorrows." And all those general sources of sin, pride, self-will, and idolatry, are in the same proportion as they reign, general sources of misery. Therefore, as long as these prevail in any soul, happiness has no place there. But they must reign, till the bent of our nature is changed, that is, till we are born again. Consequently, the New-Birth is absolutely neces-

sary in order to happiness in this world, as well as in the world to come.

IV. I proposed in the last place, to subjoin a few inferences, which naturally follow from the preceding observations.

1. And, first, it follows, that baptism is not the New-Birth; they are not one and the same thing. Many indeed seem to imagine, that they are just the same: at least, they speak as if they thought so: but I do not know that this opinion is publicly avowed, by any denomination of Christians whatever. Certainly it is not by any within these kingdoms, whether of the Established Church, or dissenting from it. The judgment of the latter is clearly declared, in their large Catechism:* Q. "What are the parts of a sacrament? A. The parts of a sacrament are two: the one, an outward and sensible sign; the other an inward and spiritual grace thereby signified. Q. What is baptism? Baptism is a sacrament, wherein Christ hath ordained the washing with water, to be a sign and seal of regeneration by his Spirit." Here it is manifest, baptism the sign, is spoken of as distinct from regeneration, the thing signified.

In the Church Catechism likewise, the judgment of our Church is declared with the utmost clearness. "What meanest thou by this word, sacrament? I mean an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. What is the outward part, or form in baptism? Water, wherein the person is baptized, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. What is the inward part, or thing signified? A death unto sin, and a new-birth unto righteousness." Nothing therefore is plainer, than that, according to the Church of England, baptism is not the New-Birth.

But indeed the reason of the thing is so clear and evident, as not to need any other authority. For what can be more plain, than that the one is an external, the other an internal work? That the one is a visible, the other an invisible thing, and therefore that they are wholly different from

* Q. 163, 165.

each other: the one being an act of man, purifying the body: the other a change wrought by God in the soul: so that the former is just as distinguishable from the latter, as the soul from the body, or water from the Holy Ghost.

2. From the preceding reflections we may, secondly, observe, That as the New-Birth is not the same thing with baptism, so it does not always accompany baptism: they do not constantly go together. A man may possibly be *born of water*, and yet not be *born of the Spirit*. There may sometimes be the outward sign, where there is not the inward grace. I do not now speak with regard to infants: it is certain, our Church supposes, that all, who are baptized in their infancy, are at the same time born again. And it is allowed, that the whole office for the baptism of infants, proceeds upon this supposition. Nor is it an objection of any weight against this, that we cannot comprehend, how this work can be wrought in infants? For neither can we comprehend, how it is wrought in a person of riper years. But whatever be the case with infants, it is sure all of riper years, who are baptized, are not at the same time, born again. "The tree is known by its fruit:" and hereby it appears too plain to be denied, that divers of those, who were children of the devil before they were baptized, continue the same after baptism: "for the works of their father they do;" they continue servants of sin, without any pretence either to inward or outward holiness.

3. A third inference which we may draw from what has been observed is, That the New-Birth is not the same thing with Sanctification. This is indeed taken for granted by many; particularly by an eminent Writer, in his late treatise on "The Nature and Grounds of Christian Regeneration." To wave several other weighty objections, which might be made to that Tract, this is a palpable one: it all along speaks of regeneration as a progressive work, carried on in the soul by slow degrees, from the time of our first turning to God. This is undeniably true of Sanctification; but of Regeneration, the New-Birth, it is not true. This is a part of Sanctification, not the whole; it is the gate of

it, the entrance into it. When we are born again, then our Sanctification, our inward and outward holiness begins. And thenceforward we are gradually to "grow up in him, who is our head." This expression of the Apostle admirably illustrates the difference between one and the other, and farther points out the exact analogy there is between natural and spiritual things. A child is born of a woman in a moment, or at least in a very short time. Afterward he gradually and slowly grows, till he attains to the stature of a man. In like manner a person is born of God in a short time, if not in a moment. But it is by slow degrees that he afterward grows up to the measure of the full stature of Christ. The same relation, therefore, which there is between our natural birth and our growth, there is also, between our New-Birth and our Sanctification.

4. One point more we may learn from the preceding observations. But it is a point of so great importance, as may excuse the considering it the more carefully, and prosecuting it at some length. What must one who loves the souls of men, and is grieved that any of them should perish, say to one whom he sees living in sabbath-breaking, drunkenness, or any other wilful sin? What can he say, if the foregoing observations are true, but, "You must be born again." "No," says a zealous man, "that cannot be. How can you talk so uncharitably to the man? Has he not been baptized already? He cannot be born again now." Can he not be born again? Do you affirm this? Then he cannot be saved. Though he be as old as Nicodemus was, yet "except he be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Therefore in saying, "he cannot be born again," you in effect deliver him over to damnation. And where lies the uncharitableness now? On my side, or on yours? I say, he may be born again, and so become an heir of salvation. You say, "he cannot be born again." And if so, he must inevitably perish. So you utterly block up his way to salvation, and send him to hell, out of mere charity!

But perhaps the sinner himself, to whom in real charity we say, "You must be born again," has been taught to

say, "I defy your new doctrine; I need not 'be born again.' I was 'born again' when I was baptized. What! Would you have me deny my baptism?" I answer, first, there is nothing under heaven which can excuse a lie. Otherwise I should say to an open sinner, if you have been baptized, do not own it. For how highly does this aggravate your guilt! How will it encrease your damnation! Were you devoted to God at eight days old, and have you been all these years devoting yourself to the devil? Were you, even before you had the use of reason, consecrated to God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost? And have you, ever since you had the use of it, been flying in the face of God, and consecrating yourself to Satan? Does the abomination of desolation, the love of the world, pride, anger, lust, foolish desire, and a whole train of vile affections, stand where it ought not? Have you set up all these accursed things in that soul, which was once "a temple of the Holy Ghost?" Set apart for "an habitation of God, through the Spirit?" Yea, solemnly given up to him? And do you glory in this, that you once belonged to God? O be ashamed! Blush! Hide yourself in the earth! Never boast more of what ought to fill you with confusion, to make you ashamed before God and man! I answer, secondly, You have already denied your baptism; and that in the most effectual manner. You have denied it a thousand and a thousand times: and you do so still, day by day. For in your baptism you renounced the devil and all his works. Whenever therefore, you give place to him again, whenever you do any of the works of the devil, then you deny your baptism. Therefore you deny it by every wilful sin: by every act of uncleanness, drunkenness, or revenge; by every obscene or profane word; by every oath that comes out of your mouth. Every time you profane the day of the Lord, you thereby deny your baptism: yea, every time you do any thing to another, which you would not he should do to you. I answer, thirdly, Be you baptized or unbaptized, "you must be born again." Otherwise it is not possible you should be inwardly holy: and without

inward as well as outward holiness, you cannot be happy, even in this world; much less in the world to come. Do you say, "Nay, but I do no harm to any man; I am honest and just in all my dealings; I do not curse, or take the Lord's name in vain; I do not profane the Lord's-day; I am no drunkard; I do not slander my neighbour, nor live in any wilful sin." If this be so, it were much to be wished that all men went as far as you do. But you must go farther yet, or you cannot be saved; still, "you must be born again." Do you add, "I do go farther yet; for I do not only do no harm, but do all the good I can;" I doubt that fact; I fear you have had a thousand opportunities of doing good, which you have suffered to pass by unimproved, and for which therefore you are accountable to God. But if you had improved them all, if you really had done all the good you possibly could to all men, yet this does not at all alter the case: still "you must be born again." Without this, nothing will do any good to your poor, sinful, polluted soul. "Nay, but I constantly attend all the ordinances of God: I keep to my church and sacrament." It is well you do. But all this will not keep you from hell, except you be born again. Go to church twice a day, go to the Lord's table every week, say ever so many prayers in private, read ever so many good books, still "you must be born again:" none of these things will stand in the place of the New-Birth: no, nor any thing under heaven. Let this therefore, if you have not already experienced this inward work of God, be your continual prayer. "Lord, add this to all thy blessings, let me be *born again*. Deny whatever thou pleasest, but deny not this, let me be *born from above*. Take away whatsoever seemeth thee good,—reputation, fortune, friends, health. Only give me this, to be *born of the Spirit!* To be received among the children of God. Let me be born, 'not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.' And then let me daily 'grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!'"

SERMON XXII.

THE SCRIPTURE WAY OF SALVATION.

EPHESIANS ii. 8.

"*Ye are saved through Faith.*"

1. NOTHING can be more intricate, complex, and hard to be understood, than religion, as it has often been described. And this is not only true concerning the religion of the Heathens, even many of the wisest of them, but concerning the religion of those also who were, in some sense, Christians: yea, and men of great name in the christian world, men, *who seemed to be pillars* thereof. Yet how easy to be understood, how plain and simple a thing is the genuine religion of Jesus Christ! Provided only that we take it in its native form, just as it is described in the Oracles of God. It is exactly suited, by the wise Creator and Governor of the world, to the weak understanding, and narrow capacity of man in his present state. How observable is this, both with regard to the end it proposes, and the means to attain that end! The end is, in one word, Salvation: the means to attain it, Faith.

2. It is easily discerned, that these two little words, I mean Faith and Salvation, include the substance of all the Bible, the marrow, as it were, of the whole Scripture. So much the more should we take all possible care, to avoid

all mistake concerning them, and to form a true and accurate judgment concerning both the one and the other.

Let us then seriously enquire,

I. What is Salvation?
II. What is that Faith whereby we are saved? And,
III. How are we saved by it?

I. 1. And, First, let us enquire, What is *Salvation?* The salvation which is here spoken of, is not what is frequently understood by that word, the going to heaven, eternal happiness. It is not the soul's going to Paradise, termed by our Lord *Abraham's bosom.* It is not a blessing which lies on the other side death, or, as we usually speak, in the other world. The very words of the text itself put this beyond all question; "Ye are saved." It is not something at a distance; it is a present thing; a blessing, which, through the free mercy of God, ye are now in possession of. Nay, the words may be rendered, and that with equal propriety, "Ye *have been* saved." So that the salvation, which is here spoken of, might be extended to the entire work of God, from the first dawning of grace in the soul, till it is consummated in glory.

2. If we take this in its utmost extent, it will include all that is wrought in the soul, by what is frequently termed, *natural conscience*, but more properly, *preventing grace:* all the *drawings of the Father*, the desires after God which, if we yield to them, increase more and more: all that *light*, wherewith the Son of God, "enlighteneth every one that cometh into the world," *shewing* every man, "to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with his God:" all the *convictions* which his Spirit, from time to time, works in every child of man. Although it is true, the generality of men stifle them as soon as possible; and, after a while, forget, or at least deny that they ever had them at all.

3. But we are at present concerned only with that salvation, which the Apostle is directly speaking of. And this consists of two general parts, justification and sanctification.

Justification is another word for pardon. It is the forgiveness of all our sins, and, what is necessarily implied therein, our acceptance with God. The price whereby this hath been procured for us (commonly termed the *meritorious cause* of our justification) is the blood and righteousness of Christ; or, to express it a little more clearly, all that Christ hath done and suffered for us, till he "poured out his soul for the transgressors." The immediate effects of justification are, the peace of God, a "peace that passeth all understanding," and a "rejoicing in hope of the glory of God, with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

4. And at the same time that we are justified, yea, in that very moment, *sanctification* begins. In that instant, we are "born again, born from above, born of the Spirit." There is a *real* as well as a *relative* change. We are inwardly renewed by the power of God. We feel "the love of God shed abroad in our heart, by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us," producing love to all mankind, and more especially to the children of God: expelling the love of the world, the love of pleasure, of ease, of honour, of money; together with pride, anger, self-will, and every other evil temper; in a word, changing the *earthly, sensual, devilish mind*, into "the mind which was in Christ Jesus."

5. How naturally do those who experience such a change, imagine that all sin is gone? That it is utterly rooted out of their heart, and has no more any place therein? How easily do they draw that inference, "I *feel* no sin, therefore I *have* none." It does not *stir;* therefore it does not *exist:* it has no *motion*, therefore it has no *being*.

6. But it is seldom long before they are undeceived, finding sin was only suspended, not destroyed. Temptations return and sin revives, shewing it was but stunned before, not dead. They now feel two principles in themselves, plainly contrary to each other, "the flesh lusting against the Spirit," nature opposing the grace of God. They cannot deny, that, although they still feel power to believe in Christ, and to love God; and, although his "Spirit *still* witnesses with their spirit, that they are the children of

God:" yet they feel in themselves sometimes pride or self-will, sometimes anger or unbelief. They find one or more of these frequently *stirring* in their heart, though not *conquering*: yea, perhaps, "thrusting sore at them, that they may fall;" but the Lord is their help.

7. How exactly did Mecarius, fourteen hundred years ago, describe the present experience of the children of God? "The unskilful, [or unexperienced] when grace operates, presently imagine, they have no more sin. Whereas, they that have discretion cannot deny, that even we who have the grace of God, may be molested again.—For we have often had instances of some among the brethren, who have experienced such grace, as to affirm that they had no sin in them. And yet, after all, when they thought themselves entirely freed from it, the corruption that lurked within was stirred up anew, aud they were well nigh burnt up."

8. From the time of our being *born again*, the gradual work of sanctification takes place. We are enabled, "by the Spirit, to mortify the deeds of the body," of our evil nature. And as we are more and more dead to sin, we are more and more alive to God. We go on from grace to grace, while we are careful to "abstain from all appearance of evil," and are "zealous of good works," as we have opportunity of doing good to all men; while we walk in all his ordinances blameless, therein worshipping him in spirit and in truth: while we take up our cross, and deny ourselves of every pleasure that does not lead us to God.

9. It is thus that we wait for entire sanctification, for a full salvation from all our sins, from pride, self-will, anger, unbelief: or, as the Apostle expresses it, "go on to perfection." But what is perfection? The word has various senses: here it means perfect love. It is love excluding sin: love filling the heart, taking up the whole capacity of the soul. It is love "rejoicing evermore, praying without ceasing, and in every thing giving thanks."

II. But what is that "Faith thro' which we are saved?" This is the second point to be considered.

1. Faith in general is defined by the Apostle, Ελεγχος

πραγμάτων ου βλεπομένων. *An evidence*, a divine *evidence and conviction* [the word means both] *of things not seen*: not visible, not perceivable either by sight, or by any other of the external senses. It implies both a supernatural *evidence* of God and of the things of God, a kind of spiritual *light* exhibited to the soul, and a supernatural *sight* or perception thereof: accordingly the Scripture speaks sometimes of God's giving light, sometimes a power of discerning it. So St. Paul, "God, who commanded light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." And elsewhere the same Apostle speaks *of the eyes of* our *understanding being opened*. By this two-fold operation of the Holy Spirit, having the eyes of our soul both *opened* and *enlightened*, we see the things which the natural "eye hath not seen, neither the ear heard." We have a prospect of the invisible things of God: we see the *spiritual world*, which is all round about us, and yet no more discerned, by our natural faculties, than if it had no being. And we see the *eternal world*, piercing through the veil which hangs between time and eternity. Clouds and darkness then rest upon it no more, but we already see the glory which shall be revealed.

2. Taking the word in a more particular sense, faith is a divine evidence and conviction, not only that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself;" but also that *Christ loved* me, *and gave himself for* me. It is by faith (whether we term it, the *essence*, or rather a *property* thereof) that we *receive Christ*, that we receive him in all his offices, as Prophet, Priest, and King. It is by this that he is "made of God unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

3. "But is this the *faith of assurance*, or *faith of adherence?*" The Scripture mentions no such distinction. The Apostle says, "There is one faith, and one hope of our calling," one Christian, saving faith, "as there is one Lord," in whom we believe, and "one God and Father of us all." And it is certain, this faith necessarily implies an

assurance (which is here only another word for *evidence*, it being hard to tell the difference between them) that *Christ loved* me, and *gave himself for* me. For "he that believeth," with the true living faith, "hath the witness in himself:" "The Spirit witnesseth with his spirit, that he is a child of God." "Because he is a son, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into his heart, crying, Abba, Father;" giving him an assurance that he is so, and a child-like confidence in him. But let it be observed that, in the very nature of the thing, the assurance goes before the confidence. For a man cannot have a child-like confidence in God till he know he is a child of God. Therefore confidence, trust, reliance, adherence, or whatever else it be called, is not the first, as some have supposed, but the second branch or act of faith.

4. It is by this faith we *are saved*, justified, and sanctified, taking that word in its highest sense. But how are we justified and sanctified by faith? This is our third head of enquiry. And this being the main point in question, and a point of no ordinary importance, it will not be improper to give it a more distinct and particular consideration.

III. 1. And, first, How are we justified by Faith? In what sense is this to be understood? I answer, faith is the condition, and the only condition of justification. It is the condition: none is justified but he that believes; without faith no man is justified. And it is the only condition; this alone is sufficient for justification. Every one that believes is justified, whatever else he has or has not. In other words; no man is justified till he believe: every man, when he believes, is justified.

2. But, does not God command us to repent also? Yea, and to "bring forth fruits meet for repentance?" To *cease*, for instance, *from doing evil*, and *learn to do well?* And is not both the one and the other of the utmost necessity? Insomuch, that if we willingly neglect either, we cannot reasonably expect to be justified at all? But, if this be so, how can it be said, that faith is the only condition of justification?"

God does undoubtedly command us, both to repent, and to bring forth fruits meet for repentance: which, if we wilingly neglect, we cannot reasonably expect to be justified at all: therefore, both repentance and fruits meet for repentance, are, in some sense, necessary to justification. "But they are not necessary in the *same sense* with faith, nor in the *same degree*. Not in the *same degree;* for these fruits are only necessary *conditionally;* if there be time and opportunity for them. Otherwise a man may be justified without them, as was the *thief* upon the *cross:* (if we may call him so; for a late writer has discovered that he was a very honest and respectable person!) but he cannot be justified without faith: this is impossible. Likewise, let a man have ever so much repentance, or ever so many of the fruits meet for repentance, yet all this does not at all avail: he is not justified till he believe. But the moment he believes, with or without those fruits, yea, with more or less repentance, he is justified. Not in the *same sense*; for repentance and its fruits are only *remotely* necessary, necessary in order to faith: whereas, faith is *immediately* and *directly* necessary to justification. It remains, that faith is the only condition, which is *immediately* and *proximately* necessary to justification.

3. "But do you believe we are sanctified by faith? We know you believe, that we are justified by faith: but do not you believe, and accordingly teach, that we are sanctified by our works?" So it has been roundly and vehemently affirmed for these five and twenty years. But I have constantly declared just the contrary; and that in all manner of ways. I have continually testified in private and public, That we are sanctified as well as justified by faith. And indeed the one of these great truths does exceedingly illustrate the other. Exactly as we are justified by faith, so are we sanctified by faith. Faith is the condition, and the only condition of sanctification, exactly as it is of justification. It is the condition; none is sanctified but he that believes: without faith no man is sanctified. And it is the only condition: this alone is sufficient for sanctification. Every one

that believes is sanctified, whatever else he has or has not. In other words, no man is sanctified till he believes: every man when he believes is sanctified.

4. "But is there not a repentance consequent upon, as well as a repentance previous to justification? And is it not incumbent on all that are justified to be *zealous of good works?* Yea, are not these so necessary, that if a man willingly neglect them he cannot reasonably expect that he shall ever be sanctified in the full sense, that is, *perfected in love?* Nay, can he *grow* at all *in the grace, in the* loving *knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ?* Yea, can he retain the grace which God has already given him? Can he continue in the faith which he has received, or in the favour of God? Do not yourself allow all this, and continually assert it? But, if this be so, how can it be said, that faith is the only condition of sanctification?"

5. I do allow all this, and continually maintain it as the truth of God. I allow, there is a repentance consequent upon, as well as a repentance previous to justification. It is incumbent on all that are justified to be zealous of good works. And these are so necessary, that if a man willingly neglect them he cannot reasonably expect that he shall ever be sanctified; he cannot *grow in grace*, in the image of God, the mind which was in Christ Jesus; nay, he cannot retain the grace he has received, he cannot continue in faith, or in the favour of God.

What is the inference we must draw herefrom? Why, that both repentance, rightly understood, and the practice of all good works, works of piety, as well as works of mercy, (now properly so called, since they spring from faith), are, in some sense, necessary to sanctification.

6. I say, "Repentance rightly understood." For this must not be confounded with the former repentance. The repentance, consequent upon justification, is widely different from that which is antecedent to it. This implies no guilt, no sense of condemnation, no consciousness of the wrath of God. It does not suppose any doubt of the favour of God, or "fear that hath torment." It is properly a conviction

wrought by the Holy Ghost, of the *sin* which still *remains* in our hearts, of the φρονημα σαρκος, *the carnal mind*, which "does still *remain*, (as our church speaks), even in them that are regenerate:" although it does no longer *reign*, it has not now dominion over them. It is a conviction of our proneness to evil, of a "heart bent to backsliding," of the still continuing tendency of the *flesh* to *lust against the Spirit*. Sometimes, unless we continually watch and pray, it lusteth to pride, sometimes to anger, sometimes to love of the world, love of ease, love of honour, or love of pleasure more than of God. It is a conviction of the tendency of our heart to self-will, to atheism, or idolatry: and above all, to unbelief, whereby, in a thousand ways, and under a thousand pretences, we are ever *departing*, more or less, *from the living God*.

7. With this conviction of the sin *remaining* in our hearts, there is joined a clear conviction of the sin remaining in our lives, still *cleaving* to all our words and actions. In the best of these we now discern a mixture of evil, either in the spirit, the matter or manner of them: something that could not endure the righteous judgment of God, were he "extreme to mark what is done amiss." Where we least of all suspected it, we find a taint of pride or self-will, of unbelief or idolatry: so that we are now more ashamed of our best duties than formerly of our worst sins: and hence we cannot but feel, that these are so far from having any thing meritorious in them, yea, so far from being able to stand in the sight of the divine justice, that for those also we should be guilty before God, were it not for the blood of the covenant.

8. Experience shews that, together with the conviction of sin *remaining* in our hearts and *cleaving* to all our words and actions, as well as the guilt which on account thereof we should incur, were we not continually sprinkled with the atoning blood. One thing more is implied in this repentance, viz. a conviction of our helplessness, of our utter inability to think one good thought, or to form one good desire: and much more to speak one word aright, or to

perform one good action, but through his free, almighty grace first preventing us, and then accompanying us every moment.

9. "But what good works are those, the practice of which you affirm to be necessary to *sanctification?*" First, all works of piety, such as public prayer, family prayer, and praying in our closets: receiving the supper of the Lord: searching the Scriptures by hearing, reading, meditating: and using such a measure of fasting and abstinence, as our bodily health allows.

10. Secondly: All works of mercy, whether they relate to the bodies or souls of men. Such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, entertaining the stranger, visiting those that are in prison, or sick, or variously afflicted. Such as the endeavouring to instruct the ignorant, to awaken the stupid sinner, to quicken the lukewarm, to confirm the wavering, to comfort the feeble-minded, to succour the tempted, or contribute, in any manner to the saving of souls from death. This is the repentance, and these the fruits meet for repentance, which are necessary to full *sanctification.* This is the way wherein God hath appointed his children to wait for complete salvation.

11. Hence may appear the extreme mischievousness of that seemingly innocent opinion, that "there is no sin in a believer; that all sin is destroyed, root and branch, the moment a man is *justified.*" By totally preventing that repentance, it quite blocks up the way to *sanctification;* there is no place for repentance, in him who believes there is no sin either in his life or heart. Consequently, there is no place for his being "perfected in love," to which that repentance is indispensably necessary.

12. Hence it may likewise appear, that there is no possible danger in *thus* expecting full salvation. For, suppose we were mistaken, suppose no such blessing ever was, or can be attained, yet we lose nothing: nay, that very expectation quickens us, in using all the talents which God has given us; yea, in improving them all, so that when our Lord cometh he will *receive* his *own with increase.*

13. But to return. Though it be allowed that both repentance and its fruits are necessary to full salvation; yet they are not necessary either in the *same sense* with faith, or in the *same degree*; not in the same degree; for these fruits are necessary *conditionally*, if there be time and opportunity for them, otherwise a man may be *sanctified* without them. But he cannot be *sanctified* without faith. Likewise, let a man have ever so much of this repentance, or ever so many good works, yet all this does not at all avail: he is not *sanctified* till he believe. But the moment he believes, with or without those fruits, yea, with more or less of this repentance, he is *sanctified*. Not in the *same sense;* for this repentance and these fruits are only *remotely* necessary, necessary in order to the continuance of his faith, as well as the increase of it: whereas faith is *immediately* and *directly* necessary to sanctification. It remains, that faith is the only condition, which is *immediately* and *proximately* necessary to *sanctification*.

14. "But what is that faith whereby we are *sanctified*, saved from sin and perfected in love?" It is a divine evidence and conviction, 1, That God hath promised it in the Holy Scripture. Till we are thoroughly satisfied of this, there is no moving one step further. And one would imagine there needed not one word more to satisfy a reasonable man of this than the ancient promise, "Then will I circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." How clearly does this express the being perfected in love! How strongly—imply the being saved from all sin! For, as long as love takes up the whole heart, what room is there for sin therein?

15. It is a divine evidence and conviction, Secondly, that what God hath promised he is *able* to perform. Admitting therefore that "with men it is impossible," to bring a clean thing out of an unclean, to purify the heart from all sin, and to fill it with all holiness; yet this creates no difficulty in the case, seeing "with God all things are possible." And surely no one ever imagined it was possible to any power

less than that of the Almighty! But, if God speak, it shall be done. God said, "Let there be light; and there was light."

16. It is, Thirdly, a divine evidence and conviction that he is able and willing to do it now. And why not? Is not a moment to him the same as a thousand years? He cannot want more time to accomplish whatever is his Will. And he cannot want or stay for any more *worthiness* or *fitness* in the persons he is pleased to honour. We may therefore boldly say, at any point of time, "Now is the day of salvation." "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." "Behold! all things are now ready, come unto the marriage."

17. To this confidence, that God is both able and willing to sanctify us *now*, there needs to be added one thing more, a divine evidence and conviction, that *he doth it*. In that hour it is done. God says to the inmost soul, "According to thy faith be it unto thee!" Then the soul is pure from every spot of sin; "it is clean from all unrighteousness." The believer then experiences the deep meaning of those solemn words, "If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

18. "But, does God work this great work in the soul, *gradually* or *instantaneously?*" Perhaps it may be gradually wrought in some, I mean, in this sense, they do not advert to the particular moment, wherein sin ceases to be. But it is infinitely desirable, were it the will of God, that it should be done instantaneously; that the Lord should destroy sin "by the breath of his mouth," in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. And so he generally does, a plain fact, of which there is evidence enough to satisfy any unprejudiced person. *Thou* therefore look for it every moment. Look for it in the way above described; in all those *good works* whereunto thou art "created anew in Christ Jesus." There is then no danger: you can be no worse, if you are no better for that expectation. For, were you to be disappointed of your hope, still you lose nothing. But you shall

not be disappointed of your hope: it will come, and will not tarry. Look for it then every day, every hour, every moment. Why not this hour, this moment? Certainly you may look for it *now*, if you believe it is by faith. And by this token you may surely know whether you seek it by faith or works. If by works, you want something to be done *first*, *before* you are sanctified. You think, "I must first *be* or *do* thus or thus." Then you are seeking it by works unto this day. If you seek it by faith, you may expect it *as you are:* then expect it *now*. It is of importance to observe, that there is an inseparable connection between these three points, expect it *by faith*, expect it *as you are*, and expect it *now!* To deny one of them is to deny them all. To allow one, is to allow them all. Do *you* believe we are sanctified by faith? Be true then to your principle; and look for this blessing just as you are, neither better nor worse; as a poor sinner that has nothing to pay, nothing to plead, but Christ *died*. And if you look for it as you are, then expect it *now*. Stay for nothing: why should you? Christ is ready; and he is all you want. He is waiting for you: he is at the door! Let your inmost soul cry out,

"Come in, come in, thou heavenly Guest!
Nor hence again remove;
But sup with me, and let the feast
Be everlasting love."

SERMON XXIII.

N OUR LORD'S SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

DISCOURSE I.

MATTHEW v. 1—4.

"*And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain; and when he was set, his disciples came unto him;*
"*And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,*
"*Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*
"*Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall he comforted.*"

1. OUR Lord had now "gone about all Galilee," (Mat. iv. 23,) beginning at the time "when John was cast into prison," (ver. 12,) not only "teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom," but likewise "healing all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease, among the people." It was a natural consequence of this, that "there followed him great multitudes from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judea, and from the region beyond Jordan, (ver. 25.) And seeing the multitudes," whom no synagogue could contain, even had there been any at hand, "he went up into a mountain," where there was room for all that came unto him, from every quarter. "And when he was set," as the manner of the Jews was, "his disciples came unto him. And he opened his mouth," (an expression denoting the beginning of a solemn discourse) "and taught them, saying."—

2. Let us observe, who it is that is here speaking, that we may *take heed how we hear*. It is the Lord of heaven and earth, the Creator of all, who as such, has a right to dispose of all his creatures: the Lord our Governor, whose kingdom is from everlasting, and ruleth over all; the great Lawgiver, who can well enforce all his laws, being "able to save and to destroy;" yea, to punish with everlasting destruction from his presence and from the glory of his power. It is the eternal Wisdom of the Father, who knoweth whereof we are made, and understands our inmost frame; who knows how we stand related to God, to one another, to every creature which God hath made: and consequently how to adapt every law he prescribes, to all the circumstances wherein he hath placed us. It is he who is "loving unto every man, whose mercy is over all his works:" the God of love, who having emptied himself of his eternal glory, is come forth from his Father, to declare his Will to the children of men, and then goeth again to the Father: who is sent of God "to open the eyes of the blind, and to give light to them that sit in darkness: it is the great Prophet of the Lord, concerning whom God had solemnly declared long ago, "Whosoever will not hearken unto my words, which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him," (Deut. xviii. 19.) Or, as the Apostle expresses it, "Every soul which will not hear that Prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people," Acts ii. 23.

3. And what is it which he is teaching? The Son of God, who came from heaven, is here shewing us the way to heaven, to the place which he hath prepared for us, the glory he had before the world began. He is teaching us the true way to life everlasting, the royal way which leads to the kingdom. And the only true way; for there is none besides: all other paths lead to destruction. From the character of the Speaker we are well assured, that he hath declared the full and perfect Will of God. He hath uttered not one tittle too much; nothing more than he had received of the Father. Nor too little; he hath not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God. Much less hath he

uttered any thing wrong, any thing contrary to the will of him that sent him. All his words are true and right, concerning all things, and shall stand fast for ever and ever.

And we may easily remark, That in explaining and confirming these faithful and true sayings, he takes care to refute not only the mistakes of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* which then were the false comments whereby the Jewish Teachers of that age had perverted the Word of God: but all the practical mistakes that are inconsistent with salvation, which should ever arise in the Christian Church: all the comments whereby the Christian Teachers (so called) of any age or nation, should pervert the Word of God, and teach unwary souls to seek death in the error of their life.

4. And hence we are naturally led to observe, whom it is that he is here teaching? Not the Apostles alone; if so, he had no need to have gone *up into the mountain.* A room in the house of Matthew, or any of his disciples, would have contained the twelve. Nor does it in any wise appear, that the disciples who *came unto him* were the twelve only. Οι μαθηται αυτου, without any force put upon the expression, may be understood of all who desired to *learn of him.* But to put this out of all question, to make it undeniably plain that where it is said, "He opened his mouth, and taught them," the word *them* includes all the multitudes, who went up with him into the mountain, we need only observe the concluding verses of the seventh chapter, "And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the multitudes, Οι οχλοι, were astonished at his doctrine" (or teaching.) "For he taught them" (the multitudes) "as one having authority, and not as the Scribes."

Nor was it only those multitudes who were with him on the mount, to whom he now taught the way of salvation; but all the children of men, the whole race of mankind, the children that were yet unborn; all the generations to come, even to the end of the world, who should ever hear the words of this life.

5. And this all men allow, with regard to some parts of the ensuing discourse. No man, for instance, denies that what is said of *poverty of spirit* relates to all mankind. But many have supposed, that other parts concerned only the Apostles, or the first Christians, or the Ministers of Christ: and were never designed for the generality of men, who consequently, have nothing at all to do with them.

But may we not justly enquire, who told them this? That some parts of this discourse concerned only the Apostles? Or the Christians of the Apostolic age? Or the Ministers of Christ? Bare assertions are not a sufficient proof to establish a point of so great importance. Has then our Lord himself taught us, that some parts of his discourse do not concern all mankind? Without doubt, had it been so, he would have told us; he could not have omitted so necessary an information. But has he told us so? Where? In the discourse itself? No: here is not the least intimation of it. Has he said so elsewhere? In any other of his discourses? Not one word so much as glancing this way, can we find in any thing he ever spoke, either to the multitude or to his disciples. Has any one of the Apostles, or other inspired Writers, left such an instruction upon record? No such thing. No assertion of this kind is to be found in all the Oracles of God. Who then are the men who are so much wiser than God? Wise, so far above that is written?

6. Perhaps they will say, "That the reason of the thing requires such a restriction to be made." If it do, it must be on one of these two accounts; because, without such a restriction, the discourse would either be apparently absurd, or would contradict some other scripture. But this is not the case. It will plainly appear, when we come to examine the several particulars, that there is no absurdity at all in applying all which our Lord hath here delivered, to all mankind. Neither will it infer any contradiction to any thing else he has delivered, nor to any other scripture whatever. Nay, it will farther appear, that either all the parts of this discourse are to be applied to men in general; or

no part; seeing they are all connected together, all joined as the stones in an arch, of which you cannot take one away, without destroying the whole fabric.

7. We may, lastly, observe, How our Lord teaches here. And surely, as at all times, so particularly at this, he speaks, "as never man spake." Not as the holy men of old; although they also spoke "as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Not as Peter or James, or John, or Paul. They were indeed wise master-builders in his church. But still in this, in the degrees of heavenly wisdom, the servant is not as his Lord. No, nor even as himself at any other time, or on any other occasion. It does not appear, that it was ever his design, at any other time or place, to lay down at once the whole plan of his Religion, to give us a full prospect of Christianity, to describe at large the nature of that holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. Particular branches of this he has indeed described, on a thousand different occasions. But never besides here, did he give, of set purpose, a general view of the whole. Nay, we have nothing else of this kind in all the Bible: unless one should except that short sketch of Holiness, delivered by God on those ten words or commandments, to Moses, on Mount Sinai. But even here how wide a difference is there between one and the other? "Even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth," 2 Cor. iii. 10.

8. Above all, with what amazing love does the Son of God here reveal his Father's will to man! He does not bring us again "to the mount that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest." He does not speak as when he "thundered out of heaven; when the Highest gave his thunder, hail-stones, and coals of fire." He now addresses us with his still, small voice, "Blessed" or happy "are the poor in spirit." Happy are the mourners; the meek; those that hunger after righteousness; the merciful; the pure in heart; happy in the end and in the way; happy in this life, and in life everlasting! As if he had said, Who is he that lusteth to live, and would

fain see good days? Behold, I shew you the thing which your soul longeth for; see the way which you have so long sought in vain! The way of pleasantness; the path to calm, joyous peace, to heaven below and heaven above!

9. At the same time with what authority does he teach! Well might they say, "Not as the Scribes." Observe the manner, (but it cannot be expressed in words) the air, with which he speaks! Not as Moses, the servant of God: not as Abraham, his friend: not as any of the Prophets: not as any of the sons of men. It is something more than human; more than can agree to any created being. It speaks the Creator of all, a God, a God appears! Yea, O ΩN, the Being of beings, JEHOVAH, the Self-existent, the Supreme, the GOD who is over all, blessed for ever!

10. This divine Discourse, delivered in the most excellent method, every subsequent part illustrating those that precede, is commonly, and not improperly, divided into three principal branches: the first, contained in the fifth; the second, in the sixth; and the third, in the seventh chapter. In the first, the sum of all true Religion is laid down in eight particulars, which are explained and guarded against the false glosses of man, in the following parts of the fifth chapter. In the second are rules for that right intention, which we are to preserve in all our outward actions; unmixed with worldly desires, or anxious cares for even the necessaries of life. In the third, are cautions against the main hinderances of religion, closed with an application of the whole.

I. 1. Our Lord, first, lays down the sum of all true Religion in eight particulars, which he explains, and guards against the false glosses of men, to the end of the fifth chapter.

Some have supposed that he designed in these, to point out the several stages of the Christian course; the steps which a Christian successively takes in his journey to the promised land: others, that all the particulars here set down, belong at all times to every Christian: and why may we not allow both the one and the other? What inconsis-

tency is there between them? It is undoubtedly true, that both "poverty of spirit" and every other temper which is here mentioned, are at all times found, in a greater or less degree, in every real Christian. And it is equally true, that real Christianity always begins in poverty of spirit, and goes on in the order here set down, till the "man of God is made perfect." We begin at the lowest of these gifts of God; yet so as not to relinquish this, when we are called of God, to come up higher: but "whereunto we have already attained, we hold fast," while we *press on* to what is yet *before*, to the highest blessings of God in Christ Jesus.

2. The foundation of all is "Poverty of Spirit:" here, therefore our Lord begins: "Blessed, saith he, are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

It may not improbably be supposed, that our Lord looked on those who were round about him, and observing that not many rich were there, but rather the poor of the world, took occasion from thence, to make a transition from temporal to spiritual things. "Blessed," saith he (or *happy;* so the word should be rendered, both in this and the following verses) "are the poor in spirit." He does not say, they that are *poor*, as to *outward circumstances;* it being not impossible, that some of these may be as far from happiness as a monarch upon his throne; but "the poor in spirit," they who, whatever their outward circumstances are, have that disposition of heart, which is the first step to all real, substantial happiness, either in this world, or that which is to come.

3. Some have judged, "That by the "poor in spirit" here, are meant, those who love poverty; those who are free from covetousness; from the love of money; who fear, rather than desire riches. Perhaps they have been induced so to judge, by wholly confining their thoughts to the very term; or by considering the weighty observation of St. Paul, "That the love of money is the root of all evil." And hence many have wholly divested themselves, not only of riches, but of all worldly goods. Hence also the vows

of voluntary poverty, seem to have arisen in the Romish Church: it being supposed, that so eminent a degree of this fundamental grace, must be a large step towards the "kingdom of heaven."

But these do not seem to have observed, first, That the expression of St. Paul must be understood with some restriction. Otherwise it is not true; for the love of money is not *the root*, the sole root *of all evil*. There are a thousand other roots of evil in this world, as sad experience daily shews. His meaning can only be, it is the root of very many evils; perhaps of more than any single vice besides. Secondly, this sense of the expression "poor in spirit," will by no means suit our Lord's present design, which is to lay a general foundation whereon the whole fabric of Christianity may be built; a design which would in no wise be answered by guarding against one particular vice: so that, if even this were supposed to be one part of his meaning, it could not possibly be the whole. Thirdly, it cannot be supposed to be any part of his meaning, unless we charge him with manifest tautology: seeing if "poverty of spirit" were only freedom from covetousness, from the love of money, or the desire of riches, it would coincide with what he afterwards mentions, it would be only a branch of "purity of heart."

4. Who then are "the poor in spirit?" Without question, the humble; they who know themselves: who are convinced of sin: those to whom God hath given that first repentance, which is previous to faith to Christ.

One of these can no longer say, "I am rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing:" as now knowing, that he is "wretched, and poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked." He is convinced that he is spiritually poor indeed; having no spiritual good abiding in him. "In me," saith he, dwelleth no good thing," but whatsoever is evil and abominable. He has a deep sense of the loathsome leprosy of sin, which he brought with him from his mother's womb, which overspreads his whole soul, and totally corrupts every power and faculty thereof. He

sees more and more of the evil tempers, which spring from that evil root; the pride and haughtiness of spirit, the constant bias to think of himself more highly than he ought to think: the vanity, the thirst after the esteem or honour that cometh from men: the hatred or envy, the jealousy or revenge, the anger, malice, or bitterness; the inbred enmity both against God and man, which appears in ten thousand shapes: the love of the world, the self-will, the foolish and hurtful desires, which cleave to his inmost soul. He is conscious, how deeply he has offended by his tongue; if not by profane, immodest, untrue, or unkind words, yet by discourse which was not "good to the use of edifying," nor "meet to minister grace to the hearers:" which consequently was all *corrupt* in God's account, and grievous to his Holy Spirit. His evil works are now likewise evil in his sight; if he tell them, "they are more than he is able to express." He may as well think to number the drops of rain, the sands of the sea, or the days of eternity.

5. His guilt is now also before his face: he knows the punishment he has deserved, were it only on account of his *carnal mind*, the entire, universal corruption of his nature: how much more, on account of all his evil desires and thoughts, of all his sinful words and actions! He cannot doubt for a moment, but the least of these deserves the damnation of hell; "the worm that dieth not, and the fire that never shall be quenched." Above all, the guilt of "not believing on the name of the only begotten Son of God," lies heavily upon him. *How*, saith he, *shall* I escape, who "neglect so great salvation!" "He that believeth not, is condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on him."

6. But what shall he give in exchange for his soul, which is forfeited to the just vengeance of God? "Wherewithal shall he come before the Lord?" How shall he pay him that he oweth? Were he from this moment to perform the most perfect obedience to every command of God, this would make no amends for a single sin, for any one act of past disobedience: seeing he owes God all the service he is

able to perform from this moment to all eternity, could he pay this, it would make no manner of amends, for what he ought to have done before. He sees himself therefore utterly helpless with regard to atoning for his past sins: utterly unable to make any amends to God, to pay any ransom for his own soul.

But if God would forgive him all that is past, on this one condition, that he should sin no more, that for the time to come he should entirely and constantly obey all his commands: he well knows that this would profit him nothing, being a condition he could never perform. He knows and feels, that he is not able to obey, even the outward commands of God: seeing these cannot be obeyed, while his heart remains in its natural sinfulness and corruption: inasmuch as an evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit. But he cannot cleanse a sinful heart; with men this is impossible. So that he is utterly at a loss, even how to begin walking in the path of God's commandments. He knows not how to get one step forward in the way. Encompassed with sin, and sorrow, and fear, and finding no way to escape, he can only cry out, "Lord, save, or I perish!"

7. "Poverty of spirit" then, as it implies the first step we take in running the race which is set before us, is a just sense of our inward and outward sins, and of our guilt and helplessness. This some have monstrously styled, "The virtue of humility;" thus teaching us to be proud of knowing we deserve damnation. But our Lord's expression is quite of another kind; conveying no idea to the hearer, but that of mere want, of naked sin, of helpless guilt and misery.

8. The great Apostle, where he endeavours to bring sinners to God, speaks in a manner just answerable to this. "The wrath of God, saith he, is revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men," Rom. i. 18, &c. a charge which he immediately fixes on the Heathen world, and thereby proves they were under the wrath of God. He next shews, that the Jews were no better than they, and were therefore under the same con-

demnation: and all this, not in order to their attaining "The noble virtue of humility," but "that every mouth might be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God."

He proceeds to shew, that they were helpless as well as guilty; which is the plain purport of all these expressions, "Therefore, by the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified"—"But now the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, without the law, is manifested" —"We conclude, That a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law:" expressions all tending to the same point, even to "hide pride from man:" to humble him to the dust, without teaching him to reflect upon his humility as a virtue; to inspire him with that full, piercing conviction of his utter sinfulness, guilt, and helplessness, which casts the sinner, stript of all, lost and undone, on his strong Helper, Jesus Christ the Righteous.

9. One cannot but observe here, that Christianity begins just where Heathen morality ends: "poverty of spirit, conviction of sin, the renouncing ourselves, the not having our own righteousness," the very first point in the religion of Jesus Christ, leaving all Pagan religion behind. This was ever hid from the wise men of this world: insomuch that the whole Roman language, even with all the improvements of the Augustan age, does not afford so much as a name for *humility*: (the word from whence we borrow this, as is well known, bearing in Latin a quite different meaning:) no, nor was one found in all the copious language of Greece, till it was *made* by the great Apostle.

10. O that we may feel what they were not able to express! Sinner, awake! Know thyself! Know and feel, that thou wast "shapen in wickedness, and that in sin did thy mother conceive thee," and that thou thyself hast been heaping sin upon sin, ever since thou couldst discern good from evil. Sink under the mighty hand of God, as guilty of death eternal! and cast off, renounce, abhor all imagination, of ever being able to help thyself! Be it all thy hope to be washed in his blood, and renewed by his Almighty

Spirit, who himself "bore all our sins in his own body on the tree." So shalt thou witness, "Happy are the poor in Spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

11. This is that *kingdom of heaven, or of God*, which *is within* us, even "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." And what is righteousness, but the life of God in the soul; the mind which was in Christ Jesus: the image of God stampt upon the heart, now renewed after the likeness of him that created it? What is it but the love of God, because he first loved us, and the love of all mankind, for his sake.

And what is this peace, the peace of God, but that calm serenity of soul, that sweet repose in the blood of Jesus, which leaves no doubt of our acceptance in him? Which excludes all fear, but the loving, filial fear of offending our Father which is in heaven.

This inward kingdom implies also "joy in the Holy Ghost," who seals upon our hearts, "the redemption which is in Jesus," the righteousness of Christ, imputed to us, "for the remission of the sins that are past:" who giveth us now the earnest of our inheritance" of the crown which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give in that day. And well may this be termed, "The kingdom of heaven;" seeing it is heaven already opened in the soul; the first springing up of those rivers of pleasure, which flow at God's right hand for evermore.

12. "Theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Whosoever thou art, to whom God hath given to be "poor in spirit," to feel thyself lost, thou hast a right thereto, through the gracious promise of him who cannot lie. It is purchased for thee by the blood of the Lamb. It is very nigh: thou art on the brink of heaven. Another step, and thou enterest into the kingdom of righteousness, and peace, and joy. Art thou all sin? "Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world!" All unholy? See thy "Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Art thou unable to atone for the least of thy sins? "He is the propitiation for all thy sins." Now believe on the Lord

Jesus Christ, and all thy sins shall be blotted out. Art thou totally unclean in soul and body? Here is the "fountain for sin and uncleanness." "Arise and wash away thy sins:" stagger no more at the promise through unbelief. Give glory to God: dare to believe! Now cry out from the ground of thy heart,

"Yes, I yield, I yield at last,
Listen to thy speaking blood;
Me, with all my sins I cast,
On my atoning God!"

13. Then thou learnest of him to be "lowly of heart." And this is the true, genuine, Christian humility, which flows from a sense of the love of God, reconciled to us in Christ Jesus. "Poverty of spirit," in this meaning of the word begins, where a sense of guilt and of the wrath of God ends; and is, a continual sense of our total dependance on him, for every good thought, or word, or work; of our utter inability to all good, unless he "water us every moment:" and an abhorrence of the praise of men, knowing that all praise is due unto God only. With this is joined a loving shame, a tender humiliation before God, even for the sins which we know he hath forgiven us, and for the sin which still remaineth in our hearts, although we know it is not imputed to our condemnation. Nevertheless, the conviction we feel of inbred sin, is deeper and deeper every day. The more we grow in grace, the more do we see of the desperate wickedness of our heart. The more we advance in the knowledge and love of God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, (as great a mystery as this may appear to those who know not the power of God unto salvation), the more do we discern of our alienation from God; of the enmity that is in our carnal mind, and the necessity of our being entirely renewed in righteousness and true holiness.

II. 1. It is true, he has scarcely any conception of this, who now begins to know the inward kingdom of heaven. "In his prosperity, he saith, I shall never be moved; thou, Lord, hast made my hill so strong." Sin is utterly bruised

beneath his feet, that he can scarcely believe it remaineth in him. Even temptation is silenced and speaks not again: it cannot approach, but stands afar off. He is borne aloft in the chariots of joy and love: he soars "as upon the wings of an eagle." But our Lord well knew, that this triumphant state does not often continue long. He therefore presently subjoins, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."

2. Not that we can imagine this promise belongs to those who mourn only on some worldly account: who are in sorrow and heaviness, merely on account of some worldly trouble or disappointment; such as the loss of their reputation or friends; or the impairing of their fortune. As little title to it have they who are afflicting themselves, through fear of some temporal evil; or, who pine away with anxious care, or that desire of earthly things which "maketh the heart sick." Let us not think these "shall receive any thing from the Lord:" he is not in all their thoughts. Therefore it is that they thus "walk in a vain shadow, and disquiet themselves in vain." "And this shall ye have of mine hand, saith the Lord, ye shall lie down in sorrow."

3. The mourners of whom our Lord here speaks, are those that mourn on quite another account: they that mourn after God, after him in whom they did "rejoice with joy unspeakable," when he gave them to "taste the good," the pardoning "word, and the powers of the world to come." But he now "hides his face, and they are troubled;" they cannot see him through the dark cloud. But they see temptation and sin, which they fondly supposed were gone never to return, arising again, following after them amain, and holding them in on every side. It is not strange if their soul is now disquieted within them, and trouble and heaviness take hold upon them. Nor will their great enemy fail to improve the occasion; to ask, "Where is now thy God? Where is now the blessedness whereof thou spakest? The beginning of the kingdom of heaven? Yea, hath God said, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee?' Surely God hath not said it. It was only a dream, a mere delusion, a creature of thy own

imagination. If thy sins are forgiven why art thou thus? Can a pardoned sinner be thus unholy?"—And, if then, instead of immediately crying to God, they reason with him that is wiser than they, they will be in heaviness indeed, in sorrow of heart, in anguish not to be expressed. Nay, even when God shines again upon the soul, and takes away all doubt of his past mercy, still he that is *weak in faith* may be tempted and troubled, on account of what is to come: especially, when inward sin revives, and thrusts sore at him that he may fall. Then may he again cry out,

> "I have a sin of fear, that when I've spun
> My last thread, I shall perish on the shore!"

lest I should make shipwreck of the faith, and my last estate be worse than the first:

> "Lest all my bread of life should fail,
> And I sink down unchang'd to hell."

4. Sure it is, that this "affliction," for the present, "is not joyous but grievous. Nevertheless, afterward it bringeth forth peaceable fruit unto them that are exercised thereby." *Blessed* therefore *are they that* thus *mourn*, if they "tarry the Lord's leisure," and suffer not themselves to be turned out of the way, by the miserable comforters of the world; if they resolutely reject all the comforts of sin, of folly, and vanity; all the idle diversions and amusements of the world, all the pleasures which "perish in the using," and which only tend to benumb and stupify the soul, that it may neither be sensible of itself nor God. Blessed are they who "follow on to know the Lord," and steadily refuse all other comfort. They shall be comforted by the consolations of his Spirit, by a fresh manifestation of his love; by such a witness of his accepting them in the Beloved, as shall never more be taken away from them. This "full assurance of faith" swallows up all doubt, as well as all tormenting fear; God now giving them a sure hope of an enduring substance, and "strong consolation through grace." Without disputing whether

it be possible for any of those to "fall away, who were once enlightened, and made partakers of the Holy Ghost," it suffices them to say, by the power now resting upon them, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?—I am persuaded, that neither death nor life, nor things present, nor things to come; nor height nor depth, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord," Rom. viii. 35—39.

5. This whole process, both of mourning for an absent God, and recovering the joy of his countenance, seems to be shadowed out in what our Lord spoke to his Apostles, the night before his passion, "Do ye enquire of that I said, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me? Verily, verily, I say unto you, that ye shall weep and lament," namely, when ye do not see me; "but the world shall rejoice," shall triumph over you, as though your hope were now come to an end. "And ye shall be sorrowful," through doubt, through fear, through temptatation, through vehement desire: "but your sorrow shall be turned into joy," by the return of him whom your soul loveth. "A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow because her hour is come. But as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now have sorrow:" ye mourn and cannot be comforted. "But I will see you again: and your heart shall rejoice, [with calm, inward joy,] and your joy no man taketh from you," John xvi. 19—22.

6. But although this mourning is at an end, is lost in holy joy by the return of the Comforter, yet is there another, and a blessed mourning it is, which abides in the children of God. They still mourn for the sins and miseries of mankind: they "weep with them that weep." They weep for them that weep not for themselves, for the sinners against their own souls. They mourn for the weakness and unfaithfulness of those that are, in some measure, saved from their sins. "Who is weak and they are not weak? Who is offended and they burn not?" They are grieved for the dishonour

continually done to the Majesty of heaven and earth. At all times they have an awful sense of this, which brings a deep seriousness upon their spirits: a seriousness which is not a little increased, since the eyes of their understanding were opened, by their continually seeing the vast ocean of eternity, without a bottom or a shore, which has already swallowed up millions of millions of men, and is gaping to devour them that yet remain. They see here, the house of God eternal in the heavens; there, hell and destruction without a covering; and thence feel the importance of every moment, which just appears, and is gone for ever.

7. But all this wisdom of God is foolishness with the world. The whole affair of *mourning* and *poverty of spirit* is with them stupidity and dulness. Nay, it is well if they pass so favourable a judgment upon it; if they do not vote it to be mere moping and melancholy, if not downright lunacy and distraction. And it is no wonder at all, that this judgment should be passed, by those who know not God. Suppose, as two persons were walking together, one should suddenly stop, and with the strongest signs of fear and amazement, cry out, "On what a precipice do we stand! See, we are on the point of being dashed in pieces! Another step, and we fall into that huge abyss. Stop! I will not go on for all the world." When the other, who seemed to himself at least equally sharp-sighted, looked forward and saw nothing of all this; what would he think of his companion? But that he was *beside himself;* that his head was out of order: that much religion (if he was not guilty of much learning) had certainly *made him mad.*

8. But let not the children of God, "the mourners in Sion," be moved by any of these things. Ye, whose eyes are enlightened, be not troubled by those who walk on still in darkness. Ye do not walk on in a vain shadow: God and eternity are real things. Heaven and hell are in very deed open before you: and ye are on the edge of the great gulf. It has already swallowed up more than words can express, nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues; and still yawns to devour, whether they see it or not, the giddy,

miserable children of men. O cry aloud! Spare not! Lift up your voice, to him who grasps both time and eternity, both for yourselves and your brethren, that ye may be counted worthy to escape the destruction that cometh as a whirlwind! That ye may be brought safe, through all the waves and storms, into the haven where you would be. Weep for yourselves till he wipes away the tears from your eyes. And even then, weep for the miseries that come upon the earth, till the Lord of all shall put a period to misery and sin, shall wipe away the tears from all faces, and "the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea."

SERMON XXIV.

DISCOURSE II.

ON OUR LORD's SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

MATTHEW v. 5—7.

"*Blessed are the Meek, for they shall inherit the Earth.*
"*Blessed are they that do Hunger and Thirst after Righteousness, for they shall be filled.*
"*Blessed are the Merciful, for they shall obtain Mercy.*"

1. WHEN "the winter is past, when the time of singing is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in the land;" when He that comforts the mourners is now returned, "that he may abide with them for ever:" when at the brightness of his presence the clouds disperse, the dark clouds of doubt and uncertainty, the storms of fear flee away, the waves of sorrow subside, and their spirit again *rejoiceth in God* their *Saviour:* then is it that this word is eminently fulfilled; then those whom he hath comforted can bear witness, "Blessed," or *happy*, "are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

2. But who are the meek? Not those who grieve at nothing, because they know nothing; who are not discomposed at the evils that occur, because they discern not evil from good. Not those who are sheltered from the shocks of life, by a stupid insensibility; who have, either by nature or art,

the virtue of stocks and stones, and resent nothing, because they feel nothing. Brute philosophers are wholly unconcerned in this matter. Apathy is as far from meekness as from humanity. So that one would not easily conceive how any Christians of the purer ages, especially any of the Fathers of the Church, could confound these, and mistake one of the foulest errors of heathenism, for a branch of true Christianity.

3. Nor does Christian meekness imply, the being without zeal for God, any more than it does ignorance or insensibility. No; it keeps clear of every extreme, whether in excess or defect. It does not destroy but balance the affections, which the God of nature never designed should be rooted out by grace, but only brought and kept under due regulations. It poises the mind aright. It holds an even scale, with regard to anger, and sorrow, and fear: preserving the mean in every circumstance of life, and not declining either to the right hand or the left.

4. Meekness therefore seems properly to relate to ourselves. But it may be referred either to God or our neighbour. When this due composure of mind has reference to God, it is usually termed resignation; a calm acquiescence in whatsoever is his will concerning us, even though it may not be pleasing to nature; saying continually, "It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good." When we consider it more strictly, with regard to ourselves, we stile it patience or contentedness. When it is exerted toward other men, then it is mildness to the good, and gentleness to the evil.

5. They who are truly meek, can clearly discern what is evil: and they can also suffer it. They are *sensible* of every thing of this kind, but still meekness holds the reins. They are exceedingly "zealous for the Lord of Hosts;" but their zeal is always guided by knowledge, and tempered in every thought, and word, and work, with the love of God. They do not desire to extinguish any of the passions which God has for wise ends implanted in their nature. But they have the mastery of all; they hold them all in subjection, and

employ them only in subservience to those ends. And thus even the harsher and more unpleasing passions are applicable to the noblest purposes; even hatred, and anger, and fear, when engaged against sin, and regulated by faith and love, are as walls and bulwarks to the soul, so that the wicked one cannot approach to hurt it.

6. It is evident, this divine temper is not only to abide but to increase in us day by day. Occasions of exercising, and thereby increasing it, will never be wanting while we remain upon earth. "We have need of patience, that after we have done [and suffered] the Will of God, we may receive the promise." We have need of resignation, that we may in all circumstances say, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt." And we have need of "gentleness towards all men;" but, especially toward the evil and unthankful: otherwise we shall be overcome of evil, instead of overcoming evil with good.

7. Nor does meekness restrain only the outward act, as the Scribes and Pharisees taught of old, and the miserable Teachers, who are not taught of God, will not fail to do in all ages. Our Lord guards us against this, and shews the true extent of it in the following words: "Ye have heard, that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the judgment," ver. 21, &c.

"But I say unto you, that whosoever shall be angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire."

8. Our Lord here ranks under the head of murder, even that anger which goes no farther than the heart; which does not show itself by any outward unkindness; no, not so much as a passionate word. "Whosoever is angry with his brother," with any man living, seeing we are all brethren; whosoever feels any unkindness in his heart, any temper contrary to love: whosoever is angry *without a cause*, without a sufficient cause, or farther than that cause requires,

"shall be in danger of the judgment," ενοχος εστι, *shall* in that moment *be obnoxious to* the righteous judgment of God.

But would not one be inclined to prefer the reading of those copies which omit the word εικη, *without a cause?* Is it not entirely superfluous? For, if *anger at persons* be a temper contrary to love, how can there be a cause, a sufficient cause for it? Any that will justify it in the sight of God?

Anger at sin we allow. In this sense we may *be angry and* yet we *sin not.* In this sense our Lord himself is once recorded to have been angry. "He looked round about upon them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts." He was grieved at the sinners, and angry at the sin. And this is undoubtedly right before God.

9. "And whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca:" whosoever shall give way to anger, so as to utter any contemptuous word. It is observed by Commentators, that *Raca* is a Syriac word, which properly signifies, *empty, vain, foolish:* so that it is as inoffensive an expression as can well be used, toward one at whom we are displeased. And yet, whosoever shall use this, as our Lord assures us, "shall be in danger of the council:" rather, shall be obnoxious thereto: he shall be liable to a severer sentence from the Judge of all the earth.

"But whosoever shall say, Thou fool"—Whosoever shall so give place to the devil, as to break out into reviling, into designedly reproachful and contumelious language, "shall be obnoxious to hell-fire," shall, in that instant, be liable to the highest condemnation. It should be observed, that our Lord describes all these as obnoxious to capital punishment. The first, to strangling, usually inflicted on those who were condemned in one of the inferior courts: the second, to stoning, which was frequently inflicted on those who were condemned by the great Council at Jerusalem: the third, to burning alive, inflicted only on the highest offenders, in the "Valley of the sons of Hinnon." Γη Εννων, from

which that word is evidently taken, which we translate hell.

10. And, whereas men naturally imagine, that God will excuse their defect in some duties, for their exactness in others, our Lord next takes care to cut off that vain, though common imagination. He shews, That it is impossible for any sinner to *commute* with God; who will not accept one duty for another, nor take a part of obedience for the whole. He warns us, That the performing our duty to God will not excuse us from our duty to our neighbour: that works of piety, as they are called, will be so far from commending us to God, if we are wanting in charity, that, on the contrary, that want of charity will make all those works an abomination to the Lord.

"Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee," on account of thy unkind behaviour toward him, of thy calling him, *Raca*, or *Thou fool;* think not that thy gift will atone for thy anger; or that it will find any acceptance with God so long as thy conscience is defiled with the guilt of unrepented sin. "Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother," (at least, do all that in thee lies toward being reconciled), "and then come and offer thy gift," ver. 23, 24.

11. And let there be no delay in what so nearly concerneth thy soul. "Agree with thine adversary quickly"—Now: upon the spot—"while thou art in the way with him"—if it be possible, before he go out of thy sight—"Lest, at any time, the adversary deliver thee to the judge"—Lest he appeal to God, the Judge of all, "and the judge deliver thee to the officer," to Satan, the executioner of the wrath of God, "and thou be cast into prison," into hell, there to be reserved to the judgment of the great day. "Verily, I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing." But this it is impossible for thee ever to do; seeing thou hast nothing to pay. Therefore, if thou art once in that prison, the smoke of thy torment must "ascend up for ever and ever."

12. Mean time "the meek shall inherit the earth." Such is the foolishness of worldly wisdom! The wise of the world had warned them again and again, "That if they did not resent such treatment, if they would tamely suffer themselves to be thus abused, there would be no living for them upon earth; that they would never be able to procure the common necessaries of life, nor to keep even what they had; that they could expect no peace, no quiet possession, no enjoyment of any thing." Most true—suppose there were no God in the world; or, suppose he did not concern himself with the children of men. But "when God ariseth to judgment, and to help all the meek upon earth:" how doth he laugh all this heathen wisdom to scorn, and turn the "fierceness of man to his praise!" He takes a peculiar care to provide them with all things needful for life and godliness. He secures to them the provision he hath made, in spite of the force, fraud, or malice of men. And what he secures he *gives* them *richly to enjoy*. It is sweet to them, be it little or much. As *in patience* they *possess their souls*, so they truly possess whatever God hath given them. They are always content, always pleased with what they have. It pleases them, because it pleases God. So that while their heart, their desire, their joy is in heaven, they may truly be said to "inherit the earth."

13. But there seems to be a yet farther meaning in these words, even that they shall have a more eminent part "in the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness," in that inheritance, a general description of which (and the particulars we shall know hereafter) St. John hath given in the 20th chapter of the Revelation. "And I saw an angel come down from heaven—and he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent—and bound him a thousand years.—And I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and of them who had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads or in their hands, and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again, until the thousand years

were expired. This is the first resurrection: blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power. But they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years."

II. 1. Our Lord has hitherto been more immediately employed in removing the hindrances of true religion: such is pride, the first, grand hindrance of all religion, which is taken away by *poverty of spirit;* levity and thoughtlessness, which prevented any religion from taking root in the soul, till they are removed by holy *mourning:* such are anger, impatience, discontent, which are all healed by Christian *meekness.* And when once these hindrances are removed, these evil diseases of the soul, which were continually raising false cravings therein, and filling it with sickly appetites, the native appetite of a heaven-born spirit returns; it hungers and thirsts after righteousness: and, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled."

2. Righteousness, as was observed before, is the image of God, the mind which was in Christ Jesus. It is every holy and heavenly temper in one; springing from, as well as terminating in the love of God, as our Father and Redeemer, and the love of all men, for his sake.

3. "Blessed are they who do hunger and thirst after" this: In order fully to understand which expression, we should observe, First, That hunger and thirst are the strongest of all our bodily appetites. In like manner this hunger in the soul, this thirst after the image of God, is the strongest of all our spiritual appetites, when it is once awakened in the heart: yea, it swallows up all the rest in that one great desire, to be renewed after the likeness of him that created us. We should, Secondly, observe, That from the time we begin to hunger and thirst, those appetites do not cease, but are more and more craving and importunate, till we either eat and drink, or die. And even so, from the time that we begin to hunger and thirst after the whole mind which was in Christ, these spiritual appetites do not cease,

but cry after their food with more and more importunity. Nor can they possibly cease, before they are satisfied, while there is any spiritual life remaining. We may, Thirdly, observe, That hunger and thirst are satisfied with nothing but meat and drink. If you would give to him that is hungry all the world beside, all the elegance of apparel, all the trappings of state, all the treasure upon earth, yea thousands of gold and silver: if you would pay him ever so much honour, he regards it not; all these things are then of no account with him. He would still say, These are not the things I want; give me food, or else I die. The very same is the case with every soul that truly hungers and thirsts after righteousness. He can find no comfort in any thing but this; he can be satisfied with nothing else. Whatever you offer besides, it is lightly esteemed; whether it be riches, or honour, or pleasure, he still says, this is not the thing which I want. Give me love or else I die!

4. And it is as impossible to satisfy such a soul, a soul that is athirst for God, the living God, with what the world accounts religion, as with what they account happiness. The religion of the world implies three things; 1, the doing no harm, the abstaining from outward sin; at least from such as is scandalous, as robbery, theft, common swearing, drunkenness: 2, the doing good, the relieving the poor, the being charitable, as it is called: 3, the using the means of grace; at least, the going to church and to the Lord's-Supper. He, in whom these three marks are found, is termed by the world a religious man. But will this satisfy him who hungers after God? No. It is not food for his soul. He wants a religion of a nobler kind, a religion higher and deeper than this. He can no more feed on this poor, shallow, formal thing, than he can "fill his belly with the East wind." True, he is careful to abstain from the very appearance of evil: he is zealous of good works. He attends all the ordinances of God. But all this is not what he longs for. This is only the outside of that religion, which he insatiably hungers after. The knowledge of God in Christ Jesus, "the life which is hid with Christ in God," the being

"joined unto the Lord in one spirit," the "fellowship with the Father and the Son:" the "walking in the light as God is in the light," the being "purified even as he is pure:" this is the religion, the righteousness he thirsts after. Nor can he rest, till he thus rests in God.

5. "Blessed are they who thus hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled." They shall be filled with the things which they long for; even with righteousness and true holiness. God shall satisfy them with the blessings of his goodness, with the felicity of his chosen. He shall feed them with the bread of heaven, with the manna of his love. He shall give them to drink of his pleasures as out of the river, which he that drinketh of shall never thirst, only for more and more of the water of life. This thirst shall endure for ever.

"The painful thirst, the fond desire,
Thy joyous presence shall remove:
But my full soul shall still require
A whole eternity of love."

6. Whosoever then thou art, to whom God hath given to "hunger and thirst after righteousness," cry unto him that thou mayest never lose that inestimable gift, that this divine appetite may never cease. If many rebuke thee, and bid thee hold thy peace, regard them not, yea, cry so much the more, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on me!" "Let me not live, but to be holy as thou art holy!" No more "spend thy money for that which is not bread, nor thy labour for that which satisfieth not." Canst thou hope to dig happiness out of the earth? To find it in the things of the world? O trample under foot all its pleasures, despise its honours, count its riches as dung and dross; yea, and all the things which are beneath the sun, "for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus;" for the entire renewal of thy soul in that image of God, wherein it was originally created. Beware of quenching that blessed hunger and thirst, by what the world calls religion: a religion of form, of outside shew,

which leaves the heart as earthly and sensual as ever. Let nothing satisfy thee but the power of godliness, but a religion that is spirit and life; the dwelling in God and God in thee, the being an inhabitant of eternity; the entering in by the blood of sprinkling "within the veil, and sitting in heavenly places with Christ Jesus."

III. 1. And the more they are filled with the life of God, the more tenderly will they be concerned for those who are still without God in the world, still dead in trespasses and sins. Nor shall this concern for others lose its reward. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

The word used by our Lord, more immediately implies, the compassionate, the tender-hearted: those who, far from despising, earnestly grieve for those that do not hunger after God. This eminent part of brotherly love, is here, by a common figure, put for the whole: so that "the merciful," in the full sense of the term, are they who "love their neighbours as themselves."

2. Because of the vast importance of this love, without which, "though we speak with the tongues of men and angels, though we had the gift of prophecy, and understood all mysteries, and all knowledge, though we had all faith so as to remove mountains; yea, though we gave all our goods to feed the poor, and our very bodies to be burned, it would profit us nothing:" the wisdom of God has given us by the Apostle Paul, a full and particular account of it: by considering which we shall most clearly discern, who are the *merciful* that shall *obtain mercy*.

3. "Charity," or love, (as it were to be wished it had been rendered throughout, being a far plainer and less ambiguous word,) the love of our neighbour as Christ hath loved us, "suffereth long," is patient towards all men. It suffers all the weakness, ignorance, errors, infirmities, all the frowardness and littleness of faith, in the children of God; all the malice and wickedness of the children of the world. And it suffers all this, not only for a time, for a short season, but to the end, still feeding our enemy when

he hungers: if he thirst, still giving him drink; thus continually "heaping coals of fire," of melting love, "upon his head."

4. And in every step towards this desirable end, the "overcoming evil with good," *Love is kind:* (χρηστευεται, a word not easily translated) it is soft, mild, benign. It stands at the utmost distance from moroseness, from all harshness or sourness of spirit; and inspires the sufferer at once with the most amiable sweetness, and the most fervent and tender affection.

5. Consequently, *Love envieth not*, it is impossible it should, it is directly opposite to that baneful temper. It cannot be, that he who has this tender affection to all, who earnestly wishes all temporal and spiritual blessings, all good things in this world and the world to come, to every soul that God hath made, should be pained at his bestowing any good gift, on any child of man. If he has himself received the same, he does not grieve, but rejoice that another partakes of the common benefit. If he has not, he blesses God that his brother, at least, has, and is herein happier than himself. And the greater his love, the more does he rejoice, in the blessings of all mankind: the farther is he removed from every kind and degree of envy toward any creature.

6. Love ου περπερευεται· *Vaunteth not itself*, which coincides with the very next words, but rather (as the word likewise properly imports) *is not rash* or *hasty* in judging. It will not hastily condemn any one. It does not pass a severe sentence, on a slight or sudden view of things. It first weighs all the evidence, particularly that which is brought in favour of the accused. A true lover of his neighbour, is not like the generality of men, who even in cases of the nicest nature, "see a little, presume a great deal, and so jump to the conclusion." No: he proceeds with wariness and circumspection, taking heed to every step: willingly subscribing to that rule of the ancient Heathen, (O where will the modern Christian appear!) "I am so far from lightly believing what one man says against

another, that I will not easily believe what a man says against himself. I will always allow him second thoughts, many times counsel too."

7. It follows, Love *is not puffed up*. It does not incline or suffer any man, "to think more highly of himself than he ought to think:" but rather *to think soberly*. Yea, it humbles the soul unto the dust. It destroys all high conceits, engendering pride, and makes us rejoice to be as nothing, to be little and vile, the lowest of all, the servant of all. They who are "kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love," cannot but "in honour prefer one another." Those who, "having the same love, are of one accord, do in lowliness of mind each esteem other better than themselves."

8. "It doth not behave itself unseemly." It is not rude, or willingly offensive to any. It "renders to all their due; fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour:" courtesy, civility, humanity to all the world; in their several degrees "honouring all men." A late Writer defines good-breeding, nay, the highest degree of it, politeness, "a continnal desire to please, appearing in all the behaviour." But if so, there is none so well-bred as a Christian, a lover of all mankind. For he cannot but desire to "please all men for their good, to edification." And this desire cannot be hid: it will necessarily appear in all his intercourse with man. For his "love is without dissimulation:" it will appear in all his actions and conversation: yea, and will constrain him, though without guile, to "become all things to all men, if by any means he may save some."

9. And in becoming all things to all men, "Love seeketh not her own." In striving to please all men, the lover of mankind has no eye at all to his own temporal advantage. He covets no man's silver, or gold, or apparel: he desires nothing but the salvation of their souls. Yea, in some sense he may be said, *not to seek his own* spiritual, any more than temporal advantage. For while he is on the full stretch to save their souls from death, he, as it were, forgets himself. He does not think of himself so long as that zeal

for the glory of God swallows him up. Nay, at some times he may almost seem, through an excess of love, to give up himself, both his soul and his body: while he cries out with Moses, "Oh! this people have sinned a great sin. Yet now, if thou wilt, forgive their sin. And if not, blot me out of the book which thou hast written!" Exod. xxxii. 32, 33. Or with St. Paul, "I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh!" Rom. ix. 3.

10. No marvel that such "Love is not provoked:" ου παροξυνεται· Let it be observed, the word *easily*, strangely inserted in the translation, is not in the original. St. Paul's words are absolute. "Love is not provoked:" it is not provoked to unkindness toward any one. Occasions indeed will frequently occur: outward provocations of various kinds: but love does not yield to provocation. It triumphs over all. In all trials it looketh unto Jesus, and is more than conqueror in his love.

It is not improbable, that our Translators inserted that word, as it were, to *excuse* the Apostle; who, as they supposed, might otherwise appear to be wanting, in the very love which he so beautifully describes. They seem to have supposed this from a phrase in the Acts of the Apostles; which is likewise very inaccurately translated. When Paul and Barnabas disagreed concerning John, the translation runs thus, "And the contention was so sharp between them that they departed asunder," Acts xv. 39. This naturally induces the reader to suppose, that they were equally sharp therein: that St. Paul, who was undoubtedly right, with regard to the point in question (it being quite improper to take John with them again, who had deserted them before) was as much provoked as Barnabas, who gave such a proof of his anger, as to leave the work for which he had been set apart by the Holy Ghost. But the original imports no such thing; nor does it affirm, that St. Paul was provoked at all. It simply says και εγενετο παροξυσμος· "and there was a sharpness," *a paroxysm* of anger: in consequence of which Barnabas left St. Paul, took John, and went his own

way. Paul then "chose Silas and departed, being recommended by the brethren to the grace of God;" (which is not said concerning Barnabas) "and he went through Syria and Cilicia," as he had proposed, "confirming the churches." But to return.

11. Love prevents a thousand provocations which would otherwise arise, because "it thinketh no evil." Indeed the merciful man cannot avoid knowing many things that are evil, he cannot but see them with his own eyes, and hear them with his own ears. For love does not put out his eyes, so that it is impossible for him not to see that such things are done. Neither does it take away his understanding, any more than his senses, so that he cannot but know that they are evil. For instance: when he sees a man strike his neighbour, or hears him blaspheme God, he cannot either question the thing done, or the words spoken, or doubt of their being evil. Yet ου λογιζεται το κακον· The word λογιζεται *(thinketh)* does not refer either to our seeing and hearing, or to the first and involuntary acts of our understanding: but to our willingly *thinking* what we need not; our *inferring* evil, where it does not appear: to our *reasoning* concerning things which we do not see; our *supposing* what we have neither seen nor heard. This is what true love absolutely destroys. It tears up, root and branch, all *imagining* what we have not known. It casts out all jealousies, all evil surmisings, all readiness to believe evil. It is frank, open, unsuspicious; and as it cannot design, so neither does it fear evil.

12. "It rejoiceth not in iniquity," common as this is, even among those who bear the name of Christ: who scruple not to rejoice over their enemy, when he falleth either into affliction, or error, or sin. Indeed how hardly can they avoid this, who are zealously attached to any party! How difficult is it for them not to be pleased with any fault which they discover in those of the opposite party! With any real or supposed blemish, either in their principles or practice? What warm defenders of any cause is clear of these? Yea, who is so calm as to be altogether free? Who does

not rejoice when his adversary makes a false step, which he thinks will advantage his own cause? Only a man of love. He alone weeps over either the sin or folly of his enemy, takes no pleasure in hearing or in repeating it, but rather desires that it may be forgotten for ever.

13. But he "rejoiceth in the truth," wheresoever it is found,—"in the truth which is after godliness," bringing forth its proper fruit, holiness of heart, and holiness of conversation. He rejoices to find, that even those who oppose him, whether in regard to opinions, or some points of practice, are nevertheless lovers of God, and in other respects unreprovable. He is glad to hear good of them, and to speak all he can consistently with Truth and Justice. Indeed, good, in general, is his glory and joy, wherever diffused throughout the race of mankind. As a citizen of the world, he claims a share in the happiness of all the inhabitants of it. Because he is a man, he is not unconcerned in the welfare of any man; but enjoys whatsoever brings glory to God, and promotes peace and good-will among men.

14. This "Love covereth all things." (So, without all doubt πανΐα ςεγει should be translated: for otherwise it would be the very same with παντα υπομενει, *endureth all things.)* Because the merciful man rejoiceth not in iniquity, neither does he willingly make mention of it. Whatever evil he sees, hears, or knows, he nevertheless conceals, so far as he can, without making himself "partaker of other men's sins." Wheresoever or with whomsoever he is, if he sees any thing which he approves not, it goes not out of his lips, unless to the person concerned, if haply he may gain his brother. So far is he from making the faults or failings of others the matter of his conversation, that of the absent he never does speak at all, unless he can speak well. A tale-bearer, a back-biter, a whisperer, an evil-speaker, is to him all one as a murderer. He would just as soon cut his neighbour's throat, as thus murder his reputation. Just as soon would he think of diverting himself by setting fire to his neighbour's house, as of thus "scattering abroad

arrows, fire-brands, and death, and saying, 'Am I not in sport?'"

He makes one only exception. Sometimes he is convinced, that it is for the glory of God, or (which comes to the same) the good of his neighbour, that an evil should not be covered. In this case, for the benefit of the innocent, he is constrained to declare the guilty. But even here, 1, He will not speak at all, till love, superior love, constrains him. 2, He cannot do it from a general confused view of doing good, or of promoting the glory of God, but from a clear sight of some particular end, some determinate good which he pursues. 3, Still he cannot speak, unless he be fully convinced, that this very mean is necessary to that end: that the end cannot be answered, at least not so effectually by any other way. 4, He then doth it with the utmost sorrow and reluctance, using it as the last and worst medicine, a desperate remedy in a desperate case, a kind of poison never to be used but to expel poison. Consequently, 5, He uses it as sparingly as possible. And this he does with fear and trembling, lest he should transgress the law of love by speaking too much, more than he would have done by not speaking at all.

15. "Love believeth all things." It is always willing to think the best; to put the most favourable construction on every thing. It is ever ready to believe whatever may tend to the advantage of any one's character. It is easily convinced of (what it earnestly desires) the innocence or integrity of any man; or, at least, of the sincerity of his repentance, if he had once erred from the way. It is glad to excuse whatever is amiss: to condemn the offender as little as possible, and to make all the allowance for human weakness, which can be done without betraying the truth of God.

16. And when it can no longer believe, then "Love hopeth all things." Is any evil related of any man? Love hopes, that the relation is not true, that the thing related was never done. Is it certain it was?—"But perhaps it was not done with such circumstances as are related; so that

allowing the fact, there is room to hope it was not so ill as it is represented. Was the action apparently, undeniably evil? Love hopes the intention was not so. Is it clear, the design was evil too?—"Yet it might not spring from the settled temper of the heart, but from a start of passion, or from some vehement temptation, which hurried the man beyond himself." And even when it cannot be doubted, but all the actions, designs, and tempers are equally evil: still LOVE hopes that God will at last make bare his arm, and get himself the victory; and that "there shall be joy in heaven over this one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance."

17. Lastly: "It endureth all things." This completes the character of him that is truly merciful. He endureth not some, not many things only, not most, but absolutely *all things*. Whatever the injustice, the malice, the cruelty of men can inflict, he is able to suffer. He calls nothing intolerable; he never says of any thing, "This is not to be borne." No: he can, not only do, but suffer all things through Christ who strengtheneth him. And all he suffers does not destroy his love, nor impair it in the least. It is proof against all. It is a flame that burns even in the midst of the great deep. Many waters cannot quench his love, neither can the floods drown it." It triumphs over all. It *never faileth*, either in time or in eternity.

"In obedience to what Heaven decrees,
Knowledge shall fail and prophecy shall cease,
But lasting Charity's more ample sway,
Nor bound by time, nor subject to decay,
In happy triumph shall for ever live,
And endless good diffuse, and endless praise receive."

So shall "the merciful obtain mercy:" not only by the blessing of God upon all their ways, by his now repaying the love they bear to their brethren, a thousand fold into their own bosom: but likewise by "an exceeding and eter-

nal weight of glory," in the "kingdom prepared for them from the beginning of the world."

18. For a little while you may say, "Woe is me that I am constrained to dwell with Mesech, and to have my habitation among the tents of Kedar!" You may pour out your soul, and bemoan the loss of true, genuine love in the earth. Lost indeed! You may well say, (but not in the ancient sense) "See how *these Christians* love one another!" These Christian kingdoms, that are tearing out each other's bowels, desolating one another with fire and sword! These Christian armies, that are sending each other by thousands, yea, by ten thousands, quick into hell! These Christian nations, that are all on fire with intestine broils, party against party, faction against faction! These Christian cities, where deceit and fraud, oppression and wrong, yea, robbery and murder go not out of their streets! These Christian families torn asunder with envy, jealousy, anger, domestic jars, without number, without end! Yea, what is most dreadful, most to be lamented of all, these Christian Churches!—Churches, ("Tell it not in Gath"—But, alas! how can we hide it, either from Jews, Turks, or Pagans?) that bear the name of Christ the Prince of Peace, and wage continual war with each other! that convert sinners by burning them alive! that are "drunk with the blood of the saints!"—Does this praise belong only to "Babylon the Great, the Mother of harlots and abominations of the earth?" Nay, verily; but Reformed Churches (so called) have fairly learned to tread in her steps. Protestant Churches too know to persecute, when they have power in their hands, even unto blood. And mean while, how do they also anathematize each other! Devote each other to the nethermost hell! What wrath, what contention, what malice, what bitterness, is every where found among them! Even where they agree in essentials and only differ in opinions, or in the circumstantials of Religion. Who "follows after *only* the things that make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another?" O God! How long? Shall thy promise fail? Fear it not, ye little flock. Against hope, believe in hope. It is your Father's

good pleasure, yet to renew the face of the earth. Surely all these things shall come to an end, and the inhabitants of the earth shall learn righteousness. "Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they know war any more." "The mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains:" and all the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdoms of our God. "They shall not then hurt or destroy in all his holy mountain;" but "shall call their walls salvation, and their gates praise." They shall all be without spot or blemish, loving one another, even as Christ hath loved us.—Be thou part of the first-fruits, if the harvest is not yet. Do thou love thy neighbour as thyself. The Lord God fill thy heart with such a love to every soul, that thou mayest be ready to lay down thy life for his sake! May thy soul continually overflow with love, swallowing up every unkind and unholy temper, till he calleth thee up into the region of love, there to reign with him for ever and ever!

SERMON XXV.

DISCOURSE III.

ON OUR LORD'S SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

MATTHEW v. 8—12.

"*Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God.*
"*Blessed are the peace-makers; for they shall be called the children of God.*
"*Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*
"*Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake.*
"*Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the Prophets which were before you.*"

1. HOW excellent things are spoken of the love of our neighbour! It is "the fulfilling of the law, the end of the commandment." Without this, all we have, all we do, all we suffer, is of no value in the sight of God. But it is that love of our neighbour which springs from the love of God: otherwise itself is nothing worth. It behoves us, therefore, to examine well upon what foundation our love of our neighbour stands: whether it is really built upon the love of God: whether *we* do *love him because he first loved us:* whether we are *pure in heart.* For this is the foundation which shall never be moved. "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God."

2. "The pure in heart" are they, whose hearts God hath "purified even as he is pure;" who are purified through faith in the blood of Jesus, from every unholy affection: who being "cleansed from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfect holiness in the (loving) fear of God." They are, through the power of his grace, purified from pride, by the deepest poverty of spirit; from anger, from every unkind or turbulent passion, by meekness and gentleness; from every desire but to please and enjoy God, to know and love him more and more, by that hunger and thirst after righteousness, which now engrosses their whole soul; so that now they love the Lord their God, with all their heart, and with all their soul, and mind, and strength.

3. But how little has this *purity of heart* been regarded, by the false teachers of all ages! They have taught men barely, to abstain from all such outward impurities, as God hath forbidden by name. But they did not strike at the heart; and by not guarding against, they in effect countenanced inward corruptions.

A remarkable instance of this, our Lord has given us, in the following words: "Ye have heard, that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery," ver. 27. And in explaining this, those blind leaders of the blind, only insisted on men's abstaining from the outward act. "But I say unto you, whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart," ver. 28. For God requireth truth in the inward parts. He searcheth the heart and trieth the reins. And *if* thou *incline unto iniquity with* thy *heart, the Lord will not hear* thee.

4. And God admits no excuse for retaining any thing, which is an occasion of impurity. Therefore "if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell," ver. 29. If a person as dear to thee as thy right eye, be an occasion of thy thus offending God, a mean of exciting unholy desires in thy soul; delay not, forcibly separate

from them. "And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell," ver. 30. If any who seem as necessary to thee as thy right hand, be an occasion of sin, of impure desire; even though it were never to go beyond the heart, never to break out in word or action: constrain thyself to an entire and final parting: cut them off at a stroke: give them up to God. Any loss, whether of pleasure, or substance, or friends, is preferable to the loss of thy soul.

Two steps only it may not be improper to take, before such an absolute and final separation. First, Try whether the unclean spirit may not be driven out by fasting and prayer, and by carefully abstaining from every action, and word, and look, which thou hast found to be an occasion of evil. Secondly, If thou art not by this mean delivered, ask counsel of him that watcheth over thy soul, or at least, of some who have experience in the ways of God, touching the time and manner of that separation. But confer not with flesh and blood, lest thou be "given up to a strong delusion to believe a lie."

5. Nor may marriage itself, holy and honourable as it is, be used, as a pretence for giving a loose to our desires. Indeed, "It hath been said, whosoever will put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement." And then all was well; though he alleged no cause, but that he did not like her; or liked another better. "But I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication," (that is, adultery; the word πορνεια signifying unchastity in general, either in the married or unmarried state) "causeth her to commit adultery," if she marry again; and whosoever shall marry her that is put away, committeth adultery," ver. 31, 32.

All polygamy is clearly forbidden in these words, wherein our Lord expressly declares, That for any woman who has a husband alive, to marry again is adultery. By parity of Reason, it is adultery for any man to marry again, so

long as he has a wife alive. Yea, although they were divorced: unless that divorce had been for the cause of adultery. In that only case there is no scripture which forbids the innocent person to marry again.

6. Such is the purity of heart which God requires, and works on those who believe on the Son of his Love. And *blessed are they* who are thus *pure in heart, for they shall see God.* He will "manifest himself unto them," not only "as he doth not unto the world," but as he doth not always to his own children. He will bless them with the clearest communications of his Spirit, the most intimate "fellowship with the Father and with the Son." He will cause his presence to go continually before them, and the light of his countenance to shine upon them. It is the ceaseless prayer of their heart, "I beseech thee, shew me thy glory:" and they have the petition they ask of him. They now see him by faith, (the veil of flesh being made, as it were, transparent) even in these his lowest works, in all that surrounds them, in all that God has created and made. They see him in the height above, and in the depth beneath; they see him filling all in all.

The pure in heart see all things full of God. They see him in the firmament of heaven, in the moon, walking in brightness, in the sun, when he rejoices as a giant to run his course. They see him "making the clouds his chariots, and walking upon the wings of the wind." They see him "preparing rain for the earth, and blessing the increase of it: giving grass for the cattle, and green herb for the use of man." They see the Creator of all, wisely governing all, and "upholding all things by the word of his power." "O Lord! our Governor! How excellent is thy name in all the world!"

7. In all his providences relating to themselves, to their souls or bodies, the pure in heart do more particularly see God. They see his hand ever over them for good; giving them all things in weight and measure, numbering the hairs of their head, making a hedge round about them, and all that they have, and disposing all the circumstances

of their life, according to the depth of his wisdom and mercy.

8. But in a more especial manner they see God in his ordinances. Whether they appear in the great congregation, to "pay him the honour due unto his name, and worship him in the beauty of holiness;" or "enter into their closets" and there pour out their souls before their "Father which is in secret:" whether they search the Oracles of God, or hear the Ambassadors of Christ proclaiming glad tidings of salvation; or by eating of that bread, and drinking of that cup, "shew forth his death till he come" in the clouds of heaven: in all these his appointed ways, they find such a near approach as cannot be expressed. They see him, as it were, face to face, and "talk with him, as a man talketh with his friend;" a fit preparation for those mansions above, wherein they shall *see him as he is.*

9. But how far were they from seeing God, who having heard, "that it had been said by them of old time, (ver. 33,) Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths:" interpreted it thus, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, when thou swearest by the Lord Jehovah. Thou "shalt perform unto the Lord [these] thine oaths." But as to other oaths, he regardeth them not.

So the Pharisees taught. They not only allowed all manner of swearing in common conversation: but accounted even forswearing a little thing, so they had not sworn by the peculiar name of God.

But our Lord here absolutely forbids all common swearing, as well as all false swearing: and shews the heinousness of both, by the same awful consideration, That every creature is God's, and he is every where present, in all, and over all.

"I say unto you, Swear not at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne," ver. 34. And therefore this is the same as to swear by him, who sitteth upon the circle of the heavens: "Nor by the earth: for it is his footstool;" ver. 35: and he is as intimately present in earth as heaven:

"neither by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King," and God is well known in her palaces. "Neither shalt thou swear by thy head; because thou canst not make one hair white or black," ver. 36; because even this, it is plain, is not thine, but God's, the sole disposer of all in heaven and earth. "But let your communication," ver. 37, your conversation, your discourse with each other, "be yea, yea; nay, nay;" a bare, serious affirming or denying; "for whatsoever is more than these, cometh of evil:" εκ τȣ πονηρȣ εστιν· *is of the evil one;* proceedeth from the devil, and is a mark of his children.

10. That our Lord does not here forbid the "swearing in judgment and truth," when we are required so to do by a Magistrate, may appear, 1, From the occasion of this part of his discourse, the abuse he was here reproving, which was false swearing, and common swearing; the swearing before a Magistrate being quite out of the question. 2, From the very words wherein he forms the general conclusion, "Let your communication," or discourse, "be yea, yea; nay, nay." 3, From his own example; for he answered himself upon oath, when required by a Magistrate. When the High Priest said unto him, "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us, whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God?" Jesus immediately answered in the affirmative, "Thou hast said" (i. e. the truth) "Nevertheless (or rather, Moreover) "I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven," Matt. xxvi. 63, 64. 4, From the example of God, even the Father, who "willing the more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath," Heb. vi. 17. 5, From the example of St. Paul, who, we *think had the Spirit of God,* and well understood the mind of his Master. "God is my witness," saith he, to the Romans, "that without ceasing, I make mention of you always in my prayers," Rom. i. 9. To the Corinthians, "I call God to record upon my soul, that to spare you, I came not as yet unto Corinth,"

2 Cor. i. 23. And to the Philippians, "God is my record how greatly I long after you, in the bowels of Jesus Christ," Phil. i. 8. (Hence it undeniably appears, That if the Apostle knew the meaning of his Lord's words, they did not forbid swearing on weighty occasions, even to one another: how much less before a Magistrate!) And, lastly, From that assertion of the great Apostle, concerning solemn swearing in general, (which it is impossible he could have mentioned without any touch of blame, if his Lord had totally forbidden it) "Men verily swear by the greater, [by one greater than themselves] and an oath for confirmation is to them the end of all strife," Heb. vi. 16.

11. But the great lesson which our blessed Lord inculcates here, and which he illustrates by this example, is, That God is in all things, and that we are to see the Creator in the glass of every creature: that we should use and look upon nothing as separate from God, which indeed is a kind of practical Atheism; but with a true magnificence of thought, survey heaven and earth, and all that is therein, as contained by God in the hollow of his hand, who by his intimate presence holds them all in being, who pervades and actuates the whole created frame, and is, in a true sense, the soul of the universe.

II. 1. Thus far our Lord has been more directly employed, in teaching the Religion of the Heart. He has shewn, What Christians are to be. He proceeds to shew, What they are to do also: how inward Holiness is to exert itself, in our outward conversation. "Blessed, saith he, are the peace-makers; for they shall be called the children of God."

2. *The Peace-makers:* the word in the original is οἱ εἰρηνοποιοί· It is well known that εἰρηνη in the sacred Writings, implies all manner of good: every blessing that relates either to the soul or the body, to time or eternity. Accordingly when St. Paul, in the titles of his Epistles, wishes *grace and peace* to the Romans or the Corinthians, it is as if he had said, "As a fruit of the free, undeserved love and favour of God, may you enjoy all blessings, spiritual

and temporal; all the good things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

3. Hence we may easily learn, in how wide a sense the term *Peace-makers* is to be understood. In its literal meaning it implies, those lovers of God and man, who utterly detest and abhor all strife and debate, all variance and contention: and accordingly labour with all their might, either to prevent this fire of hell from being kindled, or when it is kindled, from breaking out, or when it is broken out, from spreading any farther. They endeavour to calm the stormy spirits of men, to quiet their turbulent passions, to soften the minds of contending parties, and, if possible, reconcile them to each other. They use all innocent arts, and employ all their strength, all the talents which God has given them, as well to preserve peace, where it is, as to restore it, where it is not. It is the joy of their heart, to promote, to confirm, to increase mutual good-will among men; but more especially among the children of God, however distinguished by things of smaller importance: that as they have all "one Lord, one faith;" as they are all "called in one hope of their calling," so they may all "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called: with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit, in the bond of peace."

4. But in the full extent of the word, a *Peace-maker* is one, that as he hath opportunity, "doth good unto all men:" one that being filled with the love of God and all mankind, cannot confine the expressions of it to his own family, or friends, or acquaintance, or party; or to those of his own opinions; no, nor those who are partakers of like precious faith: but steps over all these narrow bounds, that he may do good to every man; that he may, some way or other, manifest his love to neighbours and strangers, friends and enemies. He doth good to them all, as he hath opportunity, that is, on every possible occasion; "redeeming the time," in order thereto, buying up every opportunity, improving every hour, losing no moment wherein he may

profit another. He does good, not of one particular kind, but good in general: in every possible way, employing herein all his talents of every kind, all his powers and faculties of body and soul; all his fortune, his interest, his reputation; desiring only, that when his Lord cometh, he may say, "Well done, good and faithful servant!"

5. He doth good, to the uttermost of his power, even to the bodies of all men. He rejoices to "deal his bread to the hungry," and to "cover the naked with a garment." Is any a stranger? He takes him in, and relieves him according to his necessities. Are any sick or in prison? He visits them, and administers such help as they stand most in need of. And all this he does, not as unto man; but remembering him that hath said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

6. How much more does he rejoice, if he can do any good to the soul of any man! This power indeed belongeth unto God. It is he only that changes the heart, without which every other change is lighter than vanity. Nevertheless, it pleases him who worketh all in all, to help man chiefly by man; to convey his own power, and blessing, and love, through one man to another. Therefore, although it be certain, That "the help which is done upon earth, God doth it himself," yet has no man need, on this account, to stand idle in his vineyard. The *Peace-maker* cannot: he is ever labouring therein, and, as an instrument in God's hand, preparing the ground for his Master's use, or sowing the seed of the kingdom, or watering what is already sown, if haply God may give the increase. According to the measure of grace which he has received, he uses all diligence, either to reprove the gross sinner, to reclaim those who run on headlong in the broad way of destruction; or, "to give light to them that sit in darkness," and are ready to "perish for lack of knowledge;" or, to "support the weak, to lift up the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees;" or, to bring back and heal that which was *lame* and *turned out of the way*. Nor is he less zealous to confirm those who are

already striving to enter in at the strait gate; to strengthen those that stand, that they may "run with patience the race which is set before them;" to "build up in their most holy faith," those that know in whom they have believed: to exhort them to stir up the gift of God which is in them, that daily growing in grace, "an entrance may be ministered unto them abundantly, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

7. Blessed are they who are thus continually employed in the work of faith and the labour of love. "For they shall be called," that is, *shall be* (a common Hebraism) "the children of God." God shall continue unto them the Spirit of Adoption, yea, shall pour it more abundantly into their hearts. He shall bless them with all the blessings of his children. He shall acknowledge them as sons before angels and men; "and, if sons, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ."

III. 1. One would imagine such a person as has been above described, so full of genuine humility, so unaffectedly serious, so mild and gentle, so free from all selfish design, so devoted to God, and such an active lover of men, should be the darling of mankind. But our Lord was better acquainted with human nature in its present state. He therefore closes the character of this man of God, with shewing him the treatment he is to expect in the world. "Blessed (saith he) are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

2. In order to understand this thoroughly, let us first enquire, who are they that are *persecuted*. And this we may easily learn from St. Paul: "As of old, he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now," Gal. iv. 29. "Yea, (saith the Apostle,) and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution," 2 Tim. iii. 12. The same we are taught by St. John: "Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren," 1 John iii. 13. As if he had said, the brethren, the Christians cannot be loved, but by them

who have passed from death unto life. And most expressly, by our Lord: "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you," John xv. 18, &c.

By all these Scriptures it manifestly appears, who they are that are persecuted: namely, The righteous; "He that is born of the Spirit; all that will live godly in Christ Jesus:" they that are "passed from death unto life;" those who are "not of the world:" all those who are meek and lowly in heart, that mourn for God, that hunger after his likeness; all that love God and their neighbour, and therefore as they have opportunity, do good unto all men.

3. If it be, Secondly, enquired, Why they are persecuted? The answer is equally plain and obvious. It is "for righteousness' sake;" because they are righteous; because they are "born after the Spirit;" because they "will live godly in Christ Jesus;" because they "are not of the world." Whatever may be pretended, this is the real cause: be their infirmities more or less, still, if it were not for this, they would be borne with, and the world would love its own. They are persecuted, because they are "poor in spirit," that is, say the world, "Poor-spirited, mean, dastardly souls, good for nothing, not fit to live in the world:" because they *mourn;* "they are such dull, heavy, lumpish creatures, enough to sink any one's spirits that sees them! They are mere death-heads; they kill innocent mirth, and spoil company wherever they come:" because they are *meek;* "Tame, passive fools, just fit to be trampled upon:" because they "hunger and thirst after righteousness;" "A parcel of hot-brained enthusiasts, gaping after they know not what, not content with rational religion, but running mad after raptures and inward feelings:" because they are *merciful* lovers of all, lovers of the evil and unthankful: "Encouraging all manner of wickedness; nay, tempting

people to do mischief by impunity: and men who, it is to be feared, have their own religion still to seek; very loose in their principles:" because they are "pure in heart:" "Uncharitable creatures! that damn all the world, but those that are of their own sort! Blasphemous wretches, that pretend to make God a liar, to live without sin!" Above all, because they are *Peace-makers*, because they take all opportunities of doing good to all men. This is the grand reason why they have been persecuted in all ages, and will be till the restitution of all things.

"If they would but keep their religion to themselves it would be tolerable. But it is this spreading their errors, this infecting so many others, which is not to be endured. They do so much mischief in the world that they ought to be tolerated no longer. It is true, the men do some things well enough; they relieve some of the poor. But this too, is only done to gain the more to their party; and so, in effect, to do the more mischief." Thus the men of the world sincerely think and speak. And the more the kingdom of God prevails, the more the peace-makers are enabled to propagate lowliness, meekness, and all other divine tempers, the more mischief is done in their account. Consequently, the more are they enraged against the authors of this, and the more vehemently will they persecute them.

4. Let us, Thirdly, enquire, Who are they that persecute them? St. Paul answers, "He that is born after the flesh;" every one who is not "born of the Spirit," or, at least, desirous so to be: all that do not, at least, labour to "live godly in Christ Jesus:" all that are not "passed from death unto life," and, consequently, cannot *love the brethren: the world*, that is, according to our Saviour's account, "They who know not him that sent me:" they who know not God, even the loving, pardoning God, by the teaching of his own Spirit.

The reason is plain. The spirit which is in the world is directly opposite to the Spirit which is of God. It must therefore needs be, that those who are of the world, will be opposite to those who are of God. There is the utmost con-

trariety between them, in all their opinions, their desires, designs, and tempers. And hitherto *the leopard and the kid* cannot *lie down* in peace *together*. The proud, because he is proud, cannot but persecute the lowly; the light and airy, those that mourn: and so in every other kind; the unlikeness of disposition (were there no other) being a perpetual ground of enmity. Therefore, were it only on this account, all the servants of the devil will persecute the children of God.

5. Should it be enquired, Fourthly, How they will persecute them? It may be answered in general, just in that manner and measure which the wise Disposer of all sees will be most for his glory; will tend most to his children's growth in grace, and the enlargement of his own kingdom. There is no one branch of God's government of the world which is more to be admired than this. His ear is never heavy to the threatenings of the persecutor, or the cry of the persecuted. His eye is ever open, and his hand stretched out to direct every the minutest circumstance. When the storm shall begin, how high it shall rise, which way it shall point its course, when and how it shall end, are all determined by his unerring wisdom. The ungodly are only a sword of his: an instrument which he uses, as it pleaseth him, and which itself, when the gracious ends of his Providence are answered, is cast into the fire.

At some rare times, as when Christianity was planted first, and while it was taking root in the earth; as also when the pure doctrine of Christ began to be planted again in our nation: God permitted the storm to rise high, and his children were called to resist unto blood. There was a peculiar reason why he suffered this with regard to the Apostles, that their evidence might be the more unexceptionable. But from the annals of the Church, we learn another, and a far different reason, why he suffered the heavy persecutions which arose in the second and third centuries; namely, because the mystery of iniquity did so strongly work, because of the monstrous corruptions which even then reigned in the

Church: these God chastised, and at the same time strove to heal, by those severe but necessary visitations.

Perhaps the same observation may be made, with regard to the grand persecution in our own land. God had dealt very graciously with our nation; he had poured out various blessings upon us. He had given us peace abroad and at home; and a King, wise and good, beyond his years. And, above all, he had caused the pure light of his gospel to arise and shine amongst us. But what return did he find? "He looked for righteousness: but, behold a cry!" A cry of oppression and wrong, of ambition and injustice, of malice, and fraud, and covetousness. Yea, the cry of those who even then expired in the flames, entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabbaoth. It was then God arose to maintain his own cause, against those that held the truth in unrighteousness. Then he sold them into the hands of their persecutors, by a judgment mixed with mercy: an affliction to punish, and yet a medicine to heal the grievous backslidings of his people.

6. But it is seldom that God suffers the storm to rise so high, as torture, or death, or bonds, or imprisonment. Whereas his children are frequently called to endure those lighter kinds of persecution; they frequently suffer the estrangement of kinsfolks; the loss of the friends that were as their own soul. They find the truth of their Lord's word, (concerning the event, though not the design of his coming,) "Suppose ye that I am come to give peace upon earth? I tell you nay; but rather division," Luke xii. 51. And hence will naturally follow loss of business or employment, and consequently of substance. But all these circumstances likewise are under the wise direction of God, who allots to every one what is most expedient for him.

7. But the persecution which attends all the children of God is that our Lord describes in the following words: "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you," shall persecute by reviling you, "and say all manner

of evil against you, falsely, for my sake." This cannot fail: it is the very badge of our discipleship: it is one of the seals of our calling. It is a sure portion, entailed on all the children of God; if we have it not, we are bastards and not sons. Straight through *evil report*, as well as *good report*, lies the only way to the kingdom. The meek, serious, humble, zealous lovers of God and man, are of good report among their brethren; but of evil report with the world, who count and treat them "as the filth and off-scouring of all things."

8. Indeed some have supposed, that before the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in, the scandal of the cross will cease: that God will cause Christians to be esteemed and loved even by those who are as yet in their sins. Yea, and sure it is, that even now, he at some times suspends the contempt as well as the fierceness of men: "he makes a man's enemies to be at peace with him" for a season, and gives him favour with his bitterest persecutors. But setting aside this exempt case, *the scandal of the cross is* not yet *ceased*: but a man may say still, "If I please men, I am not the servant of Christ:" let no man therefore regard that pleasing suggestion, (pleasing, doubtless, to flesh and blood,) "That bad men only *pretend* to hate and despise them that are good, but do indeed love and esteem them in their hearts." Not so: they may employ them sometimes; but it is for their own profit. They may put confidence in them: for they know their ways are not like other men's. But still they love them not; unless so far as the Spirit of God may be striving with them. Our Saviour's words are express: "If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, therefore the world hateth you." Yea, (setting aside what exceptions may be made by the preventing grace, or the peculiar providence of God,) it hateth them as cordially and sincerely as ever it did their Master.

9. It remains only to enquire, how are the children of God to behave, with regard to persecution? And, first, they

ought not knowingly or designedly to bring it upon themselves. This is contrary, both to the example and advice of our Lord and all his Apostles; who teach us not only not to seek, but to avoid it, as far as we can, without injuring our conscience; without giving up any part of that righteousness which we are to prefer before life itself. So our Lord expressly saith, "When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another," which is indeed, when it can be taken, the most unexceptionable way of avoiding persecution.

10. Yet think not that you can always avoid it, either by this, or any other means. If ever that idle imagination steals into your heart, put it to flight by that earnest caution, "Remember the word that I said unto you, the servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you. Be ye wise as serpents, and harmless as doves." But will this screen you from persecution? Not unless you have more wisdom than your master, or more innocence than the Lamb of God.

Neither desire to avoid it, to escape it wholly; for if you do, you are none of his. If you escape the persecution, you escape the blessing; the blessing of those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake. If you are not persecuted for righteousness' sake, you cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. "If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him. But if we deny him, he will also deny us."

11. Nay, rather, "rejoice and be exceedingly glad," when men persecute you for his sake: when *they persecute* you by *reviling* you, and by "saying all manner of evil against you falsely;" (which they will not fail to mix with every kind of persecution; they must blacken you to excuse themselves.) "For so persecuted they the Prophets which were before you," those who were most eminently holy in heart and life; yea, and all the righteous which ever have been from the beginning of the world. Rejoice, because, by this mark also, ye know unto whom ye belong. And, because "great is your reward in heaven:" the reward

purchased by the blood of the Covenant, and freely bestowed in proportion to your sufferings, as well as holiness of heart and life. "Be exceedingly glad; knowing that these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

12. Mean time, let no persecution turn you out of the way of lowliness and meekness, of love and beneficence. "Ye have heard indeed that it hath been said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth," ver. 38. And your miserable teachers have hence allowed you to avenge yourselves, to return evil for evil.

"But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil:" not thus; not by returning it in kind. "But," rather than do this, "whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And, whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain."

So invincible let thy meekness be. And be thy love suitable thereto. "Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away." Only, give not away that which is another man's, that which is not thine own. Therefore, 1, Take care to owe no man any thing: for what thou owest is not thy own, but another man's. 2, Provide for those of thine own household: this also God hath required of thee; and what is necessary to sustain them in life and godliness, is also not thine own. Then, 3, Give or lend all that remains from day to day, or from year to year: only first, seeing thou canst not give or lend to all, remember the household of faith.

13. The meekness and love we are to feel, the kindness we are to shew to them which persecute us for righteousness' sake, our blessed Lord describes farther in the following verses: O that they were engraven upon our hearts!

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thy neighbour, and hate thy enemy," ver. 43, &c. (God indeed had said only the former part, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour." The children of the devil had added the latter, "And hate thy enemy") *But I say unto you*, 1, "Love your enemies." See that you bear a tender good-will to those who are most bitter of spirit against you, who wish you all manner of evil. 2, "Bless them that curse you." Are there any whose bitterness of spirit breaks forth in bitter words? Who are continually cursing and reproaching you when you are present, and "saying all evil against you" when absent? So much the rather do you bless. In conversing with them, use all mildness and softness of language. Reprove them, by repeating a better lesson before them, by shewing them how they ought to have spoken. And in speaking of them, say all the good you can, without violating the rules of Truth and Justice. 3, "Do good to them that hate you." Let your actions shew, that you are as real in love as they in hatred. Return good for evil. "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." 4, If you can do nothing more, at least "pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you." You can never be disabled from doing this; nor can all their malice or violence hinder you. Pour out your souls to God, not only for those, who did this once, but now repent. This is a little thing. "If thy brother, seven times a day, turn and say unto thee, I repent," Luke xxvii. 3; that is, if, after ever so many relapses, he give thee reason to believe, that he is really and thoroughly changed, *then thou shalt forgive him*, so as to trust him, to put him in thy bosom, as if he had never sinned against thee at all. But pray for, wrestle with God, for those that do not repent, that now despitefully use thee and persecute thee. Thus far forgive them, "not until seven times only, but until seventy times seven," Matt. xviii. 22. Whether they repent or not, yea, though they appear farther and farther from it, yet shew them this instance of kindness: "that ye may be the children," that ye may approve yourselves the genuine chil-

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ways of the Lord. And, O! what instruments hath he found from time to time, to employ in this his service! To wield this grand engine of hell, against some of the most important truths of God! Men that "would deceive, if it were possible, the very elect;" the men of faith and love: yea, that have for a season deceived and led away no inconsiderable number of them; who have fallen in all ages into the gilded snare, and hardly escaped with the skin of their teeth.

5. But has our Lord been wanting on his part? Has he not sufficiently guarded us against this pleasing delusion? Has he not armed us here with armour of proof against Satan "transformed into an angel of light?" Yea, verily: he here defends, in the clearest and strongest anner, the active, patient religion he had just described: what can be fuller and plainer than the words he immediately subjoins, to what he had said of doing and suffering? "Ye are the salt of the earth. But if the salt have lost its savour, wherewithal shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out, and trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world: a city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel; but on a candlestick, and it giveth light to all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

In order fully to explain and enforce these important words, I shall endeavour to shew, First, that Christianity is essentially a social Religion, and that to turn it into a solitary one, is to destroy it. Secondly, that to conceal this Religion is impossible, as well as utterly contrary to the design of its Author. I shall, Thirdly, answer some objections; and conclude the whole with a practical application.

I. 1. First, I shall endeavour to shew, that Christianity is essentially a social Religion; and that to turn it into a solitary Religion, is indeed to destroy it.

By Christianity I mean, that method of worshipping God, which is here revealed to man by Jesus Christ. When I say, This is essentially a social Religion, I mean not only,

that it cannot subsist so well, but that it cannot subsist at all without society, without living and conversing with other men. And in shewing this, I shall confine myself to those considerations, which will arise from the very discourse before us. But if this be shewn, then doubtless, to turn this Religion into a solitary one, is to destroy it.

Not that we can in any wise condemn, the intermixing solitude or retirement with Society. This is not only allowable, but expedient: nay, it is necessary as daily experience shews, for every one that either already is, or desires to be a real Christian. It can hardly be that we should spend one entire day, in a continued intercourse with men, without suffering loss in our soul, and in some measure grieving the Holy Spirit of God. We have need daily to retire from the world, at least, morning and evening, to converse with God, to commune more freely with our Father which is in secret: Nor indeed can a man of experience condemn even longer seasons of religious retirement, so they do not imply any neglect of the worldly employ, wherein the providence of God has placed us.

2. Yet such retirement must not swallow up all our time; this would be to destroy, not advance true Religion. For, that the Religion described by our Lord in the foregoing words, cannot subsist without society, without our living and conversing with other men, is manifest from hence, that several of the most essential branches thereof, can have no place, if we have no intercourse with the world.

3. There is no disposition (for instance) which is more essential to Christianity than meekness. Now although this, as it implies resignation to God, or patience in pain and sickness, may subsist in a desert, in a hermit's cell, in total solitude; yet as it implies (which it no less necessarily does) mildness, gentleness and long-suffering, it cannot possibly have a being, it has no place under heaven, without an intercourse with other men. So that to attempt turning this into a solitary virtue, is to destroy it from the face of the earth.

4. Another necessary branch of true Christianity, is

ye that are lowly, serious, and meek; ye that hunger after righteousness, that love God and man, that do good to all, and therefore suffer evil: ye) "are the salt of the earth." It is your very nature to season whatever is round about you. It is the nature of the divine savour which is in you, to spread to whatsoever you touch: to diffuse itself, on every side, to all those among whom you are. This is the great reason why the Providence of God has so mingled you together with other men, that whatever grace you have received of God, may, through you, be communicated to others; that every holy temper, and word, and work of yours, may have an influence on them also. By this mean, a check will, in some measure, be given, to the corruption which is in the world: and a small part, at least, saved from the general infection, and rendered holy and pure before God.

8. That we may the more diligently labour to season all we can, with every holy and heavenly temper, our Lord proceeds to shew the desperate state of those, who do not impart the Religion they have received; which indeed they cannot possibly fail to do, so long as it remains in their own hearts. "If the salt hath lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out, and trodden under foot of men." If ye who were holy and heavenly-minded, and consequently zealous of good works, have no longer that savour in yourselves, and do therefore no longer season others; if you are grown flat, insipid, dead, both careless of your own soul, and useless to the souls of other men, "wherewith shall ye be salted?" How shall ye be recovered? What help? What hope? Can tasteless salt be restored to its savour? No; "it is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out," even as the mire in the streets, "and to be trodden under foot of men," to be overwhelmed with everlasting contempt. If ye had never known the Lord, there might have been hope, if ye had never been *found in him*. But what can you now say to that, his solemn declaration, just parallel to what he hath here spoken? "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he (the Father) taketh away. He that abideth in me, and I in him, bringeth forth much fruit.—If a man

any man that is called a brother," that professes himself a Christian, "be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner," 1 Cor. v. 11. "Now I have written unto you not to keep company with him; with such an one, no not to eat." This must necessarily imply, that we break off all familiarity, all intimacy of acquaintance with them. "Yet count him not," saith the Apostle elsewhere, "as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother," 2 Thess. iii. 15: plainly shewing that even in such a case as this, we are not to renounce all fellowship with him: so that here is no advice, to separate wholly, even from wicked men. Yea, these very words teach us quite the contrary.

6. Much more the words of our Lord: who is so far from directing us, to break off all commerce with the world, that without it, according to his account of Christianity, we cannot be Christians at all. It would be easy to shew, that some intercourse even with ungodly and unholy men, is absolutely needful, in order to the full exertion of every temper, which he has described as the way to the kingdom: that it is indispensably necessary, in order to the complete exercise of poverty of spirit, of mourning, and of every other disposition which has a place here, in the genuine Religion of Jesus Christ. Yea, it is necessary to the very being of several of them; of that meekness, for example, which instead of demanding "an eye for an eye, or a tooth for a tooth," doth "not resist evil;" but causes us rather, when smitten "on the right cheek, to turn the other also:" of that mercifulness, whereby we "love our enemies, bless them that curse us, do good to them that hate us, and pray for them which despitefully use and persecute us:" and of that complication of love and all holy tempers, which is exercised in suffering for righteousness' sake. Now all these, it is clear, could have no being, were we to have no commerce with any but real Christians.

7. Indeed were we wholly to separate ourselves from sinners, how could we possibly answer that character, which our Lord gives us in these very words; "Ye" (Christians,

ye that are lowly, serious, and meek; ye that hunger after righteousness, that love God and man, that do good to all, and therefore suffer evil: ye) "are the salt of the earth." It is your very nature to season whatever is round about you. It is the nature of the divine savour which is in you, to spread to whatsoever you touch: to diffuse itself, on every side, to all those among whom you are. This is the great reason why the Providence of God has so mingled you together with other men, that whatever grace you have received of God, may, through you, be communicated to others; that every holy temper, and word, and work of yours, may have an influence on them also. By this mean, a check will, in some measure, be given, to the corruption which is in the world: and a small part, at least, saved from the general infection, and rendered holy and pure before God.

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abide not in me, (or, do not bring forth fruit) he is cast out as a branch, and withered; and men gather them (not to plant them again, but) to cast them into the fire," John xv. 2, 5, 6.

9. Toward those who have never tasted of the good word, God is, indeed, pitiful and of tender mercy. But Justice takes place with regard to those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, and have afterwards "turned back from the holy commandment then delivered to them." "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened," Heb. vi. 4, &c. in whose hearts God had once shined, to enlighten them with the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ; "who have tasted of the heavenly gift," of redemption in his blood, the forgiveness of sins; "and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost," of lowliness, of meekness, and of the love of God and man shed abroad in their hearts, by the Holy Ghost which was given unto them: "and have fallen away." καὶ παραπεσόντας, (Here is not a supposition, but a flat declaration of matter of fact) "to renew them again unto repentance: seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame."

But that none may misunderstand these awful words, it should be carefully observed, 1. Who they are, that are here spoken of; namely, they, and they only, who *were once* thus *enlightened*. They only, "who did taste of" that "heavenly gift, and were" thus "made partakers of the Holy Ghost." So that all who have not experienced these things, are wholly unconcerned in this scripture. 2. What that falling away is, which is here spoken of. It is an absolute, total apostacy. A believer may fall, and not fall away. He may fall and rise again. And if he should fall, even into sin, yet this case, dreadful as it is, is not desperate. For "we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins." But let him above all things beware, lest his "heart be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin:" lest he should sink lower and lower, till he wholly fall away, till he become as

salt that hath *lost its savour: for if we* thus *sin wilfully, after we have received the* experimental "knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins: but a certain, fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries."

II. 1. "But although we may not wholly separate ourselves from mankind, although it be granted we ought to season them, with the Religion which God has wrought in our hearts, yet may not this be done insensibly? May we not convey this into others in a secret, and almost imperceptible manner? so that scarcely any one shall be able to observe, how or when it is done? Even as salt conveys its own savour, into that which is seasoned thereby, without any noise, and without being liable to any outward observation. And if so, although we do not go out of the world, yet we may lie hid in it. We may thus far keep our Religion to ourselves, and not offend those whom we cannot help."

2. Of this plausible reasoning of flesh and blood, our Lord was well aware also. And he has given a full answer to it in those words, which come now to be considered: in explaining which, I shall endeavour to shew, as I proposed to do in the second place, That so long as true Religion abides in our hearts, it is impossible to conceal it, as well as absolutely contrary to the design of its great Author.

And, first, it is impossible for any that have it, to conceal the Religion of Jesus Christ. This, our Lord makes plain beyond all contradiction, by a two-fold comparison. "Ye are the light of the world. A city set upon a hill cannot be hid."

Ye Christians *are* "the light of the world," with regard both to your tempers and actions. Your holiness makes you as conspicuous, as the sun in the midst of heaven. As ye cannot go out of the world, so neither can ye stay in it, without appearing to all mankind. Ye may not flee from men, and while ye are among them, it is impossible to hide your lowliness and meekness, and those other dispositions whereby ye aspire to be perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. Love cannot be hid any more than light;

and least of all, when it shines forth in action; when ye exercise yourselves in the labour of love, in beneficence of every kind. As well may men think to hide a city, as to hide a Christian: yea, as well may they conceal a city set upon a hill, as a holy, zealous, active lover of God and man.

3. It is true, men who love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil, will take all possible pains to prove, That the light which is in you, is darkness. They will say evil, all manner of evil, falsely, of the good which is in you: they will lay to your charge that which is farthest from your thoughts, which is the very reverse of all you are, and all you do. And your patient continuance in well-doing, your meek suffering all things for the Lord's sake, your calm, humble joy, in the midst of persecution, your unwearied labour to overcome evil with good, will make you still more visible and conspicuous than ye were before.

4. So impossible it is, to keep our Religion from being seen, unless we cast it away; so vain is the thought of hiding the light, unless by putting it out. Sure it is, that a secret, unobserved Religion, cannot be the Religion of Jesus Christ. Whatever Religion can be concealed, is not Christianity. If a Christian could be hid, he could not be compared to a city set upon a hill; to the light of the world, the sun shining from heaven, and seen by all the world below. Never, therefore, let it enter into the heart of him whom God hath renewed in the spirit of his mind, to hide that light, to keep his Religion to himself; especially considering it is not only impossible to conceal true Christianity, but likewise absolutely contrary to the design of the great Author of it.

5. This plainly appears from the following words: "Neither do men light a candle to put it under a bushel." As if he had said, As men do not light a candle, only to cover it, so neither does God enlighten any soul with his glorious knowledge and love, to have it covered or concealed, either by prudence, falsely so called, or shame, or voluntary humility: to have it hid either in a desert, or in the world; either by avoiding men, or in conversing with them. "But they

purchased by the blood of the Covenant, and freely bestowed in proportion to your sufferings, as well as holiness of heart and life. "Be exceedingly glad; knowing that these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

12. Mean time, let no persecution turn you out of the way of lowliness and meekness, of love and beneficence. "Ye have heard indeed that it hath been said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth," ver. 38. And your miserable teachers have hence allowed you to avenge yourselves, to return evil for evil.

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ward things, and one immovably fixed on God. Learn what this meaneth, ye poor recluses, that you may clearly discern your own littleness of faith. Yea, that you may no longer judge others by yourselves, go and learn what that meaneth:

Thou, O Lord, in tender love
Dost all my burdens bear;
Lift my heart to things above,
And fix it ever there.
Calm on tumult's wheel I sit:
Midst busy multitudes alone,
Sweetly waiting at thy feet,
Till all thy will be done.

6. But the grand objection is still behind. "We appeal, say they, to experience. Our light did shine: we used outward things many years: and yet they profited nothing. We attended on all the ordinances: but we were no better for it; nor indeed any one else: nay, we were the worse. For we fancied ourselves Christians for so doing, when we knew not what Christianity meant."

I allow the fact. I allow that you and ten thousand more, have thus abused the ordinances of God: mistaking the means for the end: supposing that the doing these, or some other outward works, either was the Religion of Jesus Christ, or would be accepted in the place of it. But let the abuse be taken away, and the use remain. Now use all outward things; but use them with a constant eye to the renewal of your soul in righteousness and true holiness.

7. But this is not all. They affirm, "Experience likewise shews, That the trying to do good is but lost labour: what does it avail to feed or clothe men's bodies, if they are just dropping into everlasting fire? And what good can any man do to their souls? If these are changed, God doth it himself. Besides, all men are either good, at least desirous to be so, or obstinately evil. Now the former have no need of us. Let them ask help of God, and it shall be given them.

And the latter will receive no help from us. Nay, and our Lord forbids, to 'cast our pearls before swine.'"

I answer, 1. Whether they will finally be lost or saved, you are expressly commanded to feed the hungry and clothe the naked. If you can, and do not, whatever becomes of them, you shall go away into everlasting fire. 2. Though it is God only who changes hearts, yet he generally doth it by man. It is our part to do all that in us lies, as diligently as if we could change them ourselves, and then to leave the event to him. 3. God, in anfwer to their prayers, builds up his children by each other in every good gift; nourishing and strengthening the whole "body, by that which every joint supplieth." So that "the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee;" no, nor even "the head to the feet, I have no need of you." Lastly, How are you assured, that the persons before you are dogs or swine? Judge them not, until you have tried. "How knowest thou, O man, but thou mayest gain thy brother?" But thou mayest, under God, save his soul from death? When he spurns thy love and blasphemes the good word, then it is time to give him up to God.

8. "We have tried. We have laboured to reform sinners. And what did it avail? On many we could make no impression at all: and if some were changed for awhile, yet their goodness was but as the morning dew; and they were soon as bad, nay, worse than ever. So that we only hurt them—and ourselves too: for our minds were hurried and discomposed: perhaps filled with anger instead of love. Therefore we had better have kept our Religion to ourselves.

It is very possible this fact also may be true: that you have tried to do good and have not succeeded: yea, that those who seemed reformed, relapsed into sin, and their last state was worse than the first. And what marvel? Is the servant above his Master? But how often did he strive to save sinners, and they would not hear? or when they had followed him awhile, they turned back as a dog to his vomit? But he did not therefore desist from striving to do good: no more should you, whatever your success be. It

is your part, to do as you are commanded: the event is in the hand of God. You are not accountable for this: leave it to him, who orders all things well. "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening with-hold not thy hand; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper," Eccles. xi. 6.

"But the trial hurries and frets your own soul." Perhaps it did so for this very reason, because you thought you were accountable for the event, which no man is, nor indeed can be. Or perhaps, because you were off your guard; you were not watchful over your own spirit. But this is no reason for disobeying God. Try again; but try more warily than before. Do good (as you forgive) "not seven times only; but until seventy times seven." Only be wiser by experience: attempt it every time more cautiously than before. Be more humbled before God, more deeply convinced, that of yourself you can do nothing. Be more jealous over your own spirit; more gentle, and watchful unto prayer. Thus "cast your bread upon the waters, and you shall find it again after many days."

IV. 1. Notwithstanding all these plausible pretences for hiding it, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." This is the practical Application which our Lord himself makes of the foregoing Considerations.

"Let your light so shine"—Your lowliness of heart, your gentleness and meekness of wisdom: your serious, weighty concern for the things of eternity, and sorrow for the sins and miseries of men: your earnest desire of universal holiness and full happiness in God: your tender good-will to all mankind, and fervent love to your supreme Benefactor. Endeavour not to conceal this light, wherewith God hath enlightened your soul; but let it *shine before men*, before all with whom you are, in the whole tenour of your conversation. Let it shine still more eminently in your actions, in your doing all possible good to all men: and in your suffering for righteousness' sake, while you "rejoice and are exceeding glad, knowing that great is your reward in heaven."

2. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works: so far let a Christian be from ever designing, or desiring to conceal his Religion. On the contrary, let it be your desire, not to conceal it; not to put the "light under a bushel." Let it be your care, to place it "on a candlestick, that it may give light to all that are in the house." Only take heed, not to seek your own praise herein, not to desire any honour to yourselves. But let it be your sole aim that all, who see your good works, may "glorify your Father which is in heaven."

3. Be this your one ultimate end in all things. With this view, be plain, open, undisguised. Let your love be without dissimulation: why should you hide fair, disinterested love? Let there be no guile found in your mouth: let your words be the genuine picture of your heart. Let there be no darkness or reservedness in your conversation, no disguise in your behaviour. Leave this to those who have other designs in view; designs which will not bear the light. Be ye artless and simple to all mankind; that all may see the grace of God which is in you. And though some will harden their hearts, yet others will take knowledge, that ye have been with Jesus, and by returning themselves "to the great Bishop of their souls, glorify your Father which is in heaven."

4. With this one design, that men may *glorify God in you*, go on in his name, and in the power of his might. Be not ashamed, even to stand alone, so it be in the ways of God. Let the light which is in your heart, shine in all good works, both works of piety and works of mercy. And in order to enlarge your ability of doing good, renounce all superfluities. Cut off all unnecessary expense, in food, in furniture, in apparel. Be a good steward of every gift of God, even of these his lowest gifts. Cut off all unnecessary expense of time, all needless or useless employments. And "whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." In a word, be thou full of faith and love; do good: suffer evil. And herein be thou "steadfast, immovable: yea, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as thou knowest that thy labour is not in vain in the Lord."

SERMON XXVII.

DISCOURSE V.

ON OUR LORD's SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

MATTHEW V. 17—20.

"*Think not that I am come to destroy the Law or the Prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.*

"*For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law, till all be fulfilled.*

"*Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least Commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do, and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.*

"*For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.*"

1. AMONG the multitude of reproaches which fell upon him who "was despised and rejected of men," it could not fail to be one, That he was a Teacher of novelties, an Introducer of a *new Religion*. This might be affirmed with the more colour, because many of the expressions he had used were not common among the Jews: either they did not use them at all, or not in the same sense, not in so full and strong a meaning. Add to this, that the worshipping God

"in spirit and in truth," must always appear a new Religion to those who have hitherto known nothing but outside worship, nothing but the *form of godliness.*

2. And it is not improbable, some might hope it was so: that he was abolishing the old Religion, and bringing in another; one which, they might flatter themselves, would be an easier way to heaven. But our Lord refutes in these words both the vain hopes of the one, and the groundless calumnies of the other.

I shall consider them in the same order as they lie, taking each verse for a distinct head of Discourse.

I. 1. And, first, "Think not that I am come to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I am not come to destroy but to fulfil."

The ritual or ceremonial law, delivered by Moses to the children of Israel, containing all the injunctions and ordinances which related to the old sacrifices and service of the temple, our Lord indeed did come to destroy, to dissolve and utterly abolish. To this bear all the Apostles witness: not only Barnabas and Paul, who vehemently withstood those who taught, That Christians "ought to keep the law of Moses," Acts xv. 6: not only St. Peter, who termed the insisting on this, on the observance of the ritual law, a "tempting God, and putting a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers," saith he, "nor we were able to bear:" but "all the Apostles, elders, and brethren, being assembled with one accord," ver. 10, declared, That to command them to keep this law, was to "subvert their souls: and that it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to them, to lay no such burthen upon them." This "hand-writing of ordinances our Lord did blot out, take away, and nail to his cross," ver. 24.

2. But the Moral Law, contained in the Ten Commandments, and enforced by the prophets, he did not take away. It was not the design of his coming to revoke any part of this. This is a law which never can be broken, which "stands fast as the faithful witness in heaven." The moral stands on an entirely different foundation from the cere-

monial, ritual law; which was only designed for a temporary restraint upon a disobedient and stiff-necked people: whereas this was from the beginning of the world; being "written not on tables of stone," but on the hearts of all the children of men, when they came out of the hands of the Creator. And, however the letters once written by the finger of God, are now in a great measure defaced by sin, yet can they not wholly be blotted out, while we have any consciousness of good and evil. Every part of this law must remain in force, upon all mankind, and in all ages: as not depending either on time or place, or any other circumstances liable to change; but on the nature of God, and the nature of man, and their unchangeable relation to each other.

3. "I am not come to destroy but to fulfil." Some have conceived our Lord to mean, I am come to fulfil this, by my entire and perfect obedience to it. And it cannot be doubted but he did, in this sense, fulfil every part of it. But this does not appear to be what he intends here, being foreign to the scope of his present discourse. Without question his meaning in this place is, (consistently with all that goes before and follows after,) *I am come* to establish it in its fulness, in spite of all the glosses of men. I am come to place in a full and clear view, whatsoever was dark or obscure therein. I am come to declare the true and full import of every part of it: to shew the length and breadth, the entire extent of every commandment contained therein: and the height and depth, the inconceivable purity and spirituality of it in all its branches.

4. And this our Lord has abundantly performed in the preceding and subsequent parts of the discourse before us: in which he has not introduced a new Religion into the world, but the same which was from the beginning: a Religion, the substance of which is without question, *as old as the creation*; being coeval with man, and having proceeded from God, at the very time when "man became a living soul:" (the *substance*, I say, for some circumstances of it, now relate to man as a fallen creature.) A Religion witnessed

to both by the law, and by the prophets in all succeeding generations. Yet was it never so fully explained, nor so thoroughly understood, till the great Author of it himself condescended to give mankind this authentic comment on all the essential branches of it: at the same time declaring it should never be changed, but remain in force to the end of the world.

II. 1. "For verily I say unto you," (a solemn preface, which denotes both the importance and certainty of what is spoken,) "till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."

One jot—It is literally, *not one iota*, not the most inconsiderable vowel, *or one tittle*, μια κεραια, one corner or point of a consonant. It is a proverbial expression, which signifies that no one commandment contained in the moral law, nor the least part of any one, however inconsiderable it might seem, should ever be disannulled.

"Shall in no wise pass from the law:" ου μη παρελθη απο του νομου. The double negative here used, strengthens the sense, so as to admit of no contradiction. And the word παρελθη, it may be observed, is not barely *future;* declaring what *will* be: but has likewise the force of an *imperative;* ordering what *shall* be. It is a word of authority, expressing the sovereign will and power of him that spake: of him whose Word is the law of heaven and earth, and stands fast for ever and ever.

"One jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass, till heaven and earth pass;" or, as it is expressed immediately after, εως αν παντα γενηται, *till all* (or rather *all things) be fulfilled*, till the consummation of all things. Here is therefore no room for that poor evasion, (with which some have delighted themselves greatly,) That "no part of the law was to pass away, till *all the law* was fulfilled: but it has been fulfilled by Christ; and therefore now must pass away for the gospel to be established." Not so; the word *all* does not mean all the law, but all things in the universe; as neither has the term *fulfilled* any reference to the law, but to all things in heaven and earth.

2. From all this we may learn, That there is no contrariety at all, between the law and the gospel; that there is no need for the law to pass away, in order to the establishing the gospel. Indeed neither of them supersedes the other, but they agree perfectly well together. Yea, the very same words considered in different respects, are parts both of the law and of the gospel: if they are considered as commandments, they are parts of the law; if as promises, of the gospel. Thus, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," when considered as a commandment, is a branch of the law; when regarded as a promise, is an essential part of the gospel: the gospel being no other than the commands of the law, proposed by way of promises. Accordingly, poverty of spirit, purity of heart, and whatever else is enjoined in the holy law of God, are no other, when viewed in a gospel light, than so many great and precious promises.

3. There is, therefore, the closest connexion that can be conceived, between the law and the gospel. On the one hand, the law continually makes way for, and points us to the gospel: on the other, the gospel continually leads us to a more exact fulfilling of the law. The law, for instance, requires us to love God, to love our neighbour, to be meek, humble or lowly: we feel that we are not sufficient for these things; yea, that "with man this is impossible." But we see a promise of God, to give us that love, and to make us humble, meek and lowly. We lay hold on this gospel, on these glad tidings; it is done unto us according to our faith: and "the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us," through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

We may yet farther observe, That every command in holy Writ, is only a covered promise. For by that solemn declaration, "This is the covenant I will make after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws in your minds, and write them in your hearts," God hath engaged to give whatsoever he commands. Does he command us then to *pray without ceasing?* To *rejoice evermore?* To be *holy as he is holy?*

It is enough. He will work in us this very thing. It shall be unto us according to his word.

4. But if these things are so, we cannot be at a loss, what to think of those who in all ages of the Church, have undertaken to change or supersede some commands of God, as they professed, by the peculiar direction of his Spirit. Christ has here given us an infallible rule, whereby to judge of all such pretensions. Christianity, as it includes the whole moral law of God, both by way of injunction and of promise, if we will hear him, is designed of God, to be the last of all his dispensations. There is no other to come after this. This is to endure till the consummation of all things. Of consequence, all such new revelations, are of Satan, and not of God; and all pretences to another more perfect dispensation, fall to the ground of course. "Heaven and earth shall pass away: but *this* Word shall not pass away."

III. 1. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."

Who, what are they then, that make *The preaching of the Law*, a character of reproach? Do they not see on whom the reproach must fall? On whose head it must light at last? Whosoever on this ground despiseth us, despiseth him that sent us. For did ever any man preach the law like him? Even when he came, "not to condemn, but to save the world." When he came purposely to "bring life and immortality to light through the gospel?" Can any "preach the law" more expressly, more rigorously, than Christ does in these words? And who is he that shall amend them? Who is he that shall instruct the Son of God, how to preach? Who will teach him a better way of delivering the message which he hath received of the Father?

2. "Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments," or one of the least of these commandments.—*These Commandments*, we may observe, is a term used by our Lord as equivalent with the *Law*: or the *Law and the*

Prophets, which is the same thing, seeing the prophets added nothing to the law; but only declared, explained, or inforced it, as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

"Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments."—especially if it be done wilfully or presumptuously: —*one*;—for "he that keepeth the whole law, and [thus] offends in one point, is guilty of all:" the wrath of God abideth on him, as surely as if he had broken every one. So that no allowance is made for one darling lust; no reserve for one idol; no excuse for refraining from all besides, and only giving way to one bosom sin. What God demands is, an entire obedience; we are to have an eye to all his commandments: otherwise we lose all the labour we take in keeping some, and our poor souls for ever and ever.

One of the least, or one of the least of these *commandments*.—Here is another excuse cut off, whereby many, who cannot deceive God, miserably deceive their own souls. "This sin, saith the sinner, is it not a little one? Will not the Lord spare me in this thing? Surely he will not be extreme to mark this, since I do not offend in the greater matters of the law." Vain hope! Speaking after the manner of men, we may term these great, and those little commandments. But in reality, they are not so. If we use propriety of speech, there is no such thing as a little sin: every sin being a transgression of the holy and perfect law, and an affront on the great Majesty of heaven.

3. *And shall teach men so.* In some sense it may be said, that whosoever openly breaks any commandment, teaches others to do the same: for example speaks, and many times louder than precept. In this sense, it is apparent every open drunkard, is a teacher of drunkenness: every sabbath-breaker is constantly teaching his neighbour to profane the day of the Lord. But this is not all; an habitual breaker of the law, is seldom content to stop here. He generally teaches other men to do so too, by word as well as example: especially when he hardens his neck, and hateth to be reproved. Such a sinner soon commences an advocate for sin: he defends what he is resolved not to forsake. He excuses the

sin which he will not leave, and thus directly teaches every sin which he commits.

"He shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven:" that is, shall have no part therein. He is a stranger to the kingdom of heaven which is on earth; he hath no portion in that inheritance; no share of that righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Nor by consequence can he have any part in the glory which shall be revealed.

4. But if those who even thus *break and teach* others to break, "one of the least of these commandments, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven," shall have no part in the kingdom of Christ and of God; if even these shall be cast into "outer darkness, where is wailing and gnashing of teeth:" then where will they appear, whom our Lord chiefly and primarily intends in these words? They who, bearing the character of Teachers sent from God, do nevertheless themselves break his commandments, yea, and openly teach others so to do; being corrupt both in life and doctrine?

5. These are of several sorts. Of the first sort are they, who live in some wilful, habitual sin. Now if an ordinary sinner teaches by his example, how much more a sinful Minister? Even if he does not attempt to defend, excuse, or extenuate his sin. If he does, he is a murderer indeed, yea, the murderer-general of his congregation. He peoples the regions of death. He is the choicest instrument of the prince of darkness. When he goes hence, "hell from beneath, is moved to meet him at his coming." Nor can he sink into the bottomless pit, without dragging a multitude after him.

6. Next to these are the good-natured, good sort of men: who live an easy, harmless life, neither troubling themselves with outward sin, nor with inward holiness: men who are remarkable neither one way nor the other; neither for religion nor irreligion: who are very regular both in public and private; but do not pretend to be any stricter than their neighbours. A Minister of this kind breaks, not one, or a few only of the least commandments of God; but all the

great and weighty branches of his law, which relate to the power of godliness: and all that require us to "pass the time of our sojourning in fear," to "work out our salvation with fear and trembling;" to have our "loins always girt, and our lights burning;" to "strive or agonize to enter in at the strait-gate." And he *teaches men so*, by the whole form of his life, and the general tenor of his preaching, which uniformly tends to sooth those in their pleasing dream, who imagine themselves Christians and are not; to persuade all who attend upon his ministry, to sleep on and take their rest. No marvel therefore, if both he and they that follow him, wake together in everlasting burnings.

7. But above all these, in the highest rank of the enemies of the gospel of Christ, are they who openly and explicitly *judge the law* itself, and *speak evil of the law:* who teach men to break (λυσαι to *dissolve*, to *loose*, to *untie* the obligation of) not one only, whether of the least, or of the greatest, but all the commandments at a stroke: who teach, without any cover, in so many words, "What did our Lord do with the law? He abolished it." "There is but one duty, which is that of believing." "All commands are unfit for our times." "From any demand of the law no man is obliged now to go one step, or give away one farthing, to eat or omit one morsel." This is indeed carrying matters with a high hand. This is withstanding our Lord to the face, and telling him, That he understood not how to deliver the message on which he was sent. O Lord, lay not this sin to their charge! Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do!

8. The most surprising of all the circumstances, that attend this strong delusion, is, that they who are given up to it, really believe, that they honour Christ, by overthrowing his law, and that they are magnifying his office, while they are destroying his doctrine! Yea, they honour him just as Judas did, when he said, "Hail, Master, and kissed him." And he may as justly say, to every one of them, "Betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?" It is no other than betraying him with a kiss, to talk of his blood and take

away his crown: to set light by any part of his law, under pretence of advancing his gospel. Nor indeed can any one escape this charge, who preaches faith in any such a manner as either directly or indirectly tends to set aside any branch of obedience: who preaches Christ so as to disannul, or weaken in any wise the least of the commandments of God.

9. It is impossible, indeed, to have too high an esteem for *the faith of God's elect*. And we must all declare, "By grace ye are saved through faith:—not of works, lest any man should boast." We must cry aloud to every penitent sinner, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." But, at the same time, we must take care to let all men know, we esteem no faith but that *which worketh by love:* and that we are not *saved by faith*, unless so far as we are delivered from the power as well as the guilt of sin. And when we say, "Believe, and thou shalt be saved;" we do not mean, "Believe, and thou shalt step from sin to heaven; without any holiness coming between; faith supplying the place of holiness:" but, Believe, and thou shalt be holy; believe in the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt have peace, and power together. Thou shalt have power from him in whom thou believest, to trample sin under thy feet; power to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and to serve him with all thy strength. Thou shalt have power, "by patient continuance in well-doing, to seek for glory, and honour, and immortality." Thou shalt both *do and teach* all the commandments of God, from the least even to the greatest. Thou shalt teach them by thy life as well as thy words, and so "be called great in the kingdom of heaven."

IV. 1. Whatever other way we teach to the kingdom of heaven, to glory, honour, and immortality, be it called The way of Faith, or by any other name, it is in truth, The way to destruction. It will not bring a man peace at the last. For thus saith the Lord, "Verily I say unto you, except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of

the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

The Scribes, mentioned so often in the New Testament, as some of the most constant and vehement opposers of our Lord, were not secretaries, or men employed in writing only, as that term might incline us to believe. Neither were they Lawyers, in our common sense of the word (although the word νομικοι is so rendered in our translation.) Their employment had no affinity at all to that of a Lawyer among us. They were conversant with the laws of God, and not with the laws of man. These were their study: it was their proper and peculiar business, to read and expound the law and the prophets: particularly in the synagogues. They were the ordinary, stated Preachers among the Jews. So that if the sense of the original word was attended to, we might render it, *the Divines*. For these were the men that made Divinity their profession; and they were generally (as their name literally imports) Men of Letters; men of the greatest account for learning that were then in the Jewish nation.

2. The Pharisees were a very ancient sect, or body of men, among the Jews: originally so called from the Hebrew word פרש which signifies to *separate* or *divide*. Not that they made any formal separation from, or division in the national Church. They were only distinguished from others, by greater strictness of life, by more exactness of conversation. For they were zealous of the law in the minutest points: paying tithes of mint, anise, and cummin. And hence they were had in honour of all the people, and generally esteemed the holiest of men.

Many of the Scribes were of the sect of the Pharisees. Thus St. Paul himself, who was educated for a Scribe, first entered at the University of Tarsus, and after that in Jerusalem, at the feet of Gamaliel, (one of the most learned Scribes or Doctors of the Law, that were then in the nation) declares of himself before the council, "I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee," Acts xxiii. 6: and before King Agrippa, "after the straitest sect of our Religion, I lived a

Pharisee," Chap. xxvi. 5. And the whole body of the Scribes generally esteemed and acted in concert with the Pharisees. Hence we find our Saviour so frequently coupling them together, as coming in many respects under the same consideration. In this place they seem to be mentioned together, as the most eminent professors of Religion: the former of whom were accounted the wisest, the latter, the holiest of men.

3. What *the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees* really was, it is not difficult to determine. Our Lord has preserved an authentic account, which one of them gave of himself. And he is clear and full in describing his own righteousness; and cannot be supposed to have omitted any part of it. He *went up* indeed *into the temple to pray;* but was so intent upon his own virtues, that he forgot the design upon which he came. For it is remarkable, he does not properly pray at all. He only tells God, how wise and good he was. "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are; extortioners, unjust, adulterers! or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I possess." His righteousness therefore consisted of three parts, first, saith he, "I am not as other men are." I am not an *extortioner*, not *unjust*, not an *adulterer;* not "even as this publican." Secondly, "I fast twice in the week;" and thirdly, "Give tithes of all that I possess."

"I am not as other men are." This is not a small point. It is not every man that can say this. It is as if he had said, I do not suffer myself to be carried away by that great torrent, Custom. I live not by custom, but by Reason; not by the examples of men, but by the word of God. "I am not an extortioner, not unjust, not an adulterer:" however common these sins are, even among those who are called the people of God: (extortion, in particular, a kind of legal injustice; not punishable by any human law, the making gain of another's ignorance or necessity, having filled every corner of the land;) "nor even as this publican;" not guilty of any open or presumptuous sin; not an outward

sinner: but a fair, honest man, of blameless life and conversation.

4. "I fast twice in the week." There is more implied in this, than we may at first be sensible of. All the stricter Pharisees observed the weekly fasts; namely, every Monday and Thursday. On the former day, they fasted in memory of Moses receiving on that day (as their tradition taught) the two tables of stone written by the finger of God: on the latter, in memory of his casting them out of his hand, when he saw the people dancing round the golden calf. On these days, they took no sustenance at all, till three in the afternoon; the hour at which they began to offer up the evening sacrifice in the temple. Till that hour, it was their custom to remain in the temple, in some of the corners, apartments, or courts thereof; that they might be ready to assist at all sacrifices, and to join in all the public prayers. The time between, they were accustomed to employ, partly in private addresses to God, partly in searching the Scriptures, in reading the Law and the Prophets, and in meditating thereon. Thus much is implied in, *I fast twice in the week*, the second branch of the righteousness of a Pharisee.

5. "I give tithes of all that I possess." This the Pharisees did with the utmost exactness. They would not except the most inconsiderable thing, no, not mint, anise, and cummin. They would not keep back the least part of what they believed properly to belong to God; but gave a full tenth of their whole substance yearly, and of all their increase, whatsoever it was.

Yea, the stricter Pharisees (as has been often observed, by those who are versed in the ancient Jewish writings,) not content with giving one tenth of their substance to God, in his Priests and Levites, gave another tenth to God in the poor, and that continually. They gave the same proportion of all they had in alms, as they were accustomed to give in tithes. And this likewise they adjusted with the utmost exactness, that they might not keep back any part, but might fully render unto God the things which were God's, as they accounted this to be. So that, upon the whole,

they gave away, from year to year, an entire fifth of all that they possessed.

6. This was "the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees:" a righteousness, which in many respects, went far beyond the conception which many have been accustomed to entertain concerning it. But perhaps, it will be said, It was all false and feigned; for they were all a company of hypocrites.—Some of them doubtless were; men who had really no religion at all; no fear of God, or desire to please him; who had no concern for the honour that cometh of God, but only for the praise of men. And these are they whom our Lord so severely condemns, so sharply reproves on many occasions. But we must not suppose, because many Pharisees were hypocrites, therefore all were so. Nor indeed is hypocrisy by any means essential to the character of a Pharisee. This is not the distinguishing mark of their sect. It is rather this, (according to our Lord's account) "They trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others." This is their genuine badge. But the Pharisee of this kind cannot be an hypocrite. He must be, in the common sense of the word, sincere: otherwise he could not "trust in himself that he was righteous." The man who was here commending himself to God, unquestionably thought himself righteous. Consequently, he was no hypocrite: he was not conscious to himself of any insincerity. He now spoke to God just what he thought, that he was abundantly better than other men.

But the example of St. Paul, were there no other, is sufficient to put this out of all question. He could not only say, when he was a Christian, "Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence, toward God, and toward men," Acts xxiv. 16: but even concerning the time when he was a Pharisee: "Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day," Acts xxiii. 1. He was therefore sincere when he was a Pharisee, as well as when he was a Christian. He was no more an hypocrite when he persecuted the church, than when he preached the faith which once he persecuted.

Let this then be added to "the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees," a sincere belief that they are righteous, and in all things *doing God service.*

7. And yet, "Except your righteousness, saith our Lord, shall exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." A solemn and weighty declaration! And which it behoves all who are called by the name of Christ, seriously and deeply to consider. But before we enquire, How our righteousness may exceed theirs, let us examine, whether at present we come up to it?

First. A Pharisee was *not as other men are.* In externals he was singularly good. Are we so? Do we dare to be singular at all? Do we not rather swim with the stream? Do we not many times dispense with Religion and Reason together, because we would not *look particular?* Are we not often more afraid of being out of the fashion, than being out of the way of salvation? Have we courage to stem the tide? To run counter to the world? "To obey God rather than man?" Otherwise the Pharisee leaves us behind at the very first step. It is well if we overtake him any more.

But, to come closer, Can we use his first plea with God, which is in substance, "I do no harm, I live in no outward sin; I do nothing for which my own heart condemns me." Do you not? Are you sure of that? Do you live in no practice, for which your own heart condemns you? If you are not an adulterer, if you are not unchaste, either in word or deed, are you not unjust? The grand measure of Justice, as well as of Mercy, is, Do unto others as thou wouldest they should do unto thee. Do you walk by this rule? Do you never do unto any what you would not they should do unto you? Nay, are you not grossly unjust? Are you not an extortioner? Do you not make a gain of any one's ignorance, or necessity? Neither in buying nor selling? Suppose you are engaged in trade, do you demand, do you receive no more than the real value of what you sell? Do you demand, do you receive no more of the ignorant than of the knowing; of a little child, than of an experienced

trader? If you do, why does not your heart condemn you? You are a barefaced extortioner. Do you demand no more than the usual price of goods, of any who is in pressing want? who must have, and that without delay, the things which you can only furnish him with? If you do, this also is flat extortion. Indeed you do not come up to the righteousness of a Pharisee.

8. A Pharisee, secondly (to express his sense in our common way) used all the means of grace. As he fasted *often and much, twice in* every *week*, so he attended all the sacrifices. He was constant in public and private prayer, and in reading and hearing the Scriptures. Do you go as far as this? Do you fast *much and often?* Twice in the week? I fear not. Once at least; "on all Fridays in the year?" (So our Church clearly and peremptorily enjoins all her members to do: to observe all these, as well as the vigils and the forty days of Lent, as *days of fasting or abstinence.*) Do you fast twice in the year? I am afraid, some among us cannot plead even this!—Do you neglect no opportunity of attending and partaking of the Christian sacrifice? How many are they, who call themselves Christians, and yet are utterly regardless of it? Yea, do not eat of that bread, or drink of that cup, for months, perhaps years together? Do you every day, either hear the Scriptures, or read them and meditate thereon? Do you join in prayer with the great congregation? Daily, if you have opportunity: if not, whenever you can, particularly, on that day, which you "remember to keep it holy?" Do you strive to *make* opportunities? Are you *glad when they say unto you*, "We will go into the house of the Lord:" Are you zealous of, and diligent in, private prayer? Do you suffer no day to pass without it? Rather, are not some of you so far from spending therein (with the Pharisee) several hours in one day, that you think one hour full enough, if not too much? Do you spend an hour in a day, or in a week, in praying to your Father which is in secret? Yea, an hour in a month? Have you spent one hour together in private prayer ever since you were born? Ah poor Chris-

tian! Shall not the Pharisee rise up in the judgment against thee and condemn thee? His righteousness is far above thine, as the heaven is above the earth.

9. The Pharisee, thirdly, *paid tithes* and gave alms *of all that he possessed.* And in how ample a manner? So that he was (as we phrase it) "a man that did much good." Do we come up to him here? Which of us is so abundant as he was, in good works? Which of us gives a fifth of all his substance to God? Both of the principal, and of the increase? Who of us, out of (suppose) a hundred pounds a year, gives twenty to God and the poor; out of fifty,—ten; and so in a larger or a smaller proportion? When shall our righteousness, in using all the means of grace, in attending all the ordinances of God, in avoiding evil, and doing good, equal at least the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees?

10. Although if it only equalled theirs, what would that profit? "For verily I say unto you, except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." But how can it exceed theirs? Wherein does the righteousness of a Christian exceed that of a Scribe or Pharisee? Christian righteousness exceeds theirs, first, in the extent of it. Most of the Pharisees, though they were rigorously exact in many things, yet were emboldened by the traditions of the Elders to dispense with others of equal importance. Thus they were extremely punctual in keeping the fourth commandment: they would not even *rub an ear of corn* on the Sabbath-day: but not at all in keeping the third, making little account of light, or even false-swearing. So that their righteousness was partial: whereas the righteousness of a real Christian is universal. He does not observe one, or some parts of the law of God, and neglect the rest; but keeps all his commandments, loves them all, values them above gold or precious stones.

11. It may be indeed, that some of the Scribes and Pharisees, endeavoured to keep all the commandments, and consequently were, as touching the righteousness of the law,

that is, according to the letter of it, blameless. But still the righteousness of a Christian exceeds all this righteousness of a Scribe or Pharisee, by fulfilling the spirit as well as the letter of the law, by inward as well as outward obedience. In this, in the spirituality of it, it admits of no comparison. This is the point which our Lord has so largely proved, in the whole tenor of this discourse. Their righteousness was external only; Christian righteousness is in the inner man. The Pharisee "cleansed the outside of the cup and the platter;" the Christian is clean within. The Pharisee laboured to present God with a good life; the Christian with a holy heart. The one shook off the leaves, perhaps the fruits of sin; the other *lays the axe to the root*; as not being content with the outward form of godliness, how exact soever it be, unless the life, the spirit, the power of God unto salvation, be felt in the inmost soul.

Thus, to do no harm, to do good, to attend the ordinances of God, (the righteousness of a Pharisee) are all external: whereas, on the contrary, poverty of spirit, mourning, meekness, hunger and thirst after righteousness, the love of our neighbour, and purity of heart, (the righteousness of a Christian) are all internal. And even peace-making (or doing good) and suffering for righteousness' sake, stand entitled to the blessings annexed to them, only as they imply these inward dispositions, as they spring from, exercise, and confirm them. So that whereas the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees was external only, it may be said, in some sense, that the righteousness of a Christian is internal only: all his actions and sufferings being as nothing in themselves, being estimated before God only by the tempers from which they spring.

12. Whosoever therefore thou art, who bearest the holy and venerable name of a Christian, see, first, that thy righteousness fall not short of the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees. Be *not* thou *as other men are*. Dare to stand alone, to be, "Against Example, singularly good." If thou *follow a multitude* at all, it must be, *to do evil*. Let not Custom or Fashion be thy guide; but Reason and Re-

ligion. The practice of others is nothing to thee: "every man must give an account of himself to God." Indeed if thou canst save the soul of another, do: but at least, save one, thy own. Walk not in the path of death, because it is broad, and many walk therein. Nay, by this very token thou mayest know it. Is the way wherein thou now walkest, a broad, well-frequented, fashionable way? Then it infallibly leads to destruction. O be not thou "damned for company:" cease from evil; flee from sin as from the face of a serpent. At least, do no harm. "He that committeth sin, is of the devil." Be not thou found in that number. Touching outward sins, surely the grace of God is even now sufficient for thee. "Herein, (at least,) exercise thyself to have a conscience void of offence, toward God and toward man."

Secondly: Let not thy righteousness fall short of theirs, with regard to the ordinances of God. If thy labour or bodily strength will not allow of thy fasting *twice in the week*, however, deal faithfully with thy own soul, and fast as often as thy strength will permit. Omit no public, no private opportunity, of pouring out thy soul in prayer. Neglect no occasion of eating that bread and drinking that cup, which is the communion of the body and blood of Christ. Be diligent in searching the Scriptures; read as thou mayest, and meditate therein day and night. Rejoice to embrace every opportunity of hearing "the word of reconciliation declared by the Ambassadors of Christ, the Stewards of the mysteries of God. In using all the means of grace, in a constant and careful attendance on every ordinance of God, live up to (at least, till thou canst go beyond) the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees."

Thirdly, Fall not short of a Pharisee in doing good. Give alms of all thou dost possess. Is any hungry? Feed him. Is he athirst? Give him drink. Naked? Cover him with a garment. If thou hast this world's goods, do not limit thy beneficence to a scanty proportion. Be merciful to the uttermost of thy power. Why not, even as this Pharisee? Now "make thyself friends," while the time is,

"of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when thou failest," when this earthly tabernacle is dissolved, they "may receive thee into everlasting habitations."

13. But rest not here. Let thy *righteousness* "exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees." Be not thou content, to "keep the whole law, and offend in one point." Hold thou fast all his commandments, and "all false ways do thou utterly abhor." Do all the things, whatsoever he hath commanded, and that with all thy might. Thou canst do all things through Christ strengthening thee, though without him thou canst do nothing.

Above all, let thy righteousness exceed theirs in the purity and spirituality of it. What is the exactest form of Religion to thee? The most perfect outside righteousness? Go thou higher and deeper than all this. Let thy Religion be the Religion of the heart. Be thou poor in spirit; little, and base, and mean, and vile in thine own eyes; amazed and humbled to the dust at the love of God which is in Christ Jesus thy Lord. Be serious: let the whole stream of thy thoughts, words, and works be such as flows from the deepest conviction, that thou standest on the edge of the great gulf, that thou, and all the children of men, are just ready to drop in, either into everlasting glory, or everlasting burnings. Be meek: let thy soul be filled with mildness, gentleness, patience, long-suffering toward all men: at the same time, that all which is in thee, is athirst for God, the living God; longing to awake up after his likeness, and to be satisfied with it. Be thou a lover of God and of all mankind. In this spirit, do and suffer all things. Thus "exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees," and thou shalt be "called great in the kingdom of heaven."

END OF VOL. SEVENTH.

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